

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
TYLER DIVISION**

NATIONAL RELIGIOUS BROADCASTERS,  
SAND SPRINGS CHURCH, FIRST BAPTIST  
CHURCH WASKOM, and INTERCESSORS  
FOR AMERICA

Plaintiffs,

v.

DANNY WERFEL, IN HIS OFFICIAL  
CAPACITY AS COMMISSIONER OF  
THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE, and  
THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 6-24-cv-00311

**FIRST AMENDED**  
**COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY RELIEF**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. The Internal Revenue Code [“IRC”] prohibits only one class of nonprofit organizations from communicating their views about political candidates—those organized under § 501(c)(3) of the IRC. This is the result of language added to the IRC in 1954 and known widely as the Johnson Amendment. In general, this Section prohibits such nonprofits from supporting or opposing candidates for public office, including making statements about such candidates.
2. All for-profit corporations and all nonprofits organized under any other section of the IRC can freely speak their views about political candidates in accordance with the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment. *Citizens United v. Fed. Election Comm’n*, 510 U.S. 310 (2010).

3. Other kinds of nonprofits are free to speak about political candidates, even though such organizations are exempt from federal income tax and obtain the bulk of their income from revenue that is tax-deductible to the “donor” of the organization—usually as business expenses.
4. Churches are placed in a unique and discriminatory status by the IRC. Under § 508(c)(1) of the IRC, churches need not apply to the Internal Revenue Service [“IRS”] to obtain recognition of their 501(c)(3) status. The IRC places them automatically within the ambit of 501(c)(3) and thereby silences their speech, while providing no realistic alternative for operating in any other fashion. Churches have no choice; they are automatically silenced vis-à-vis political candidates.
5. Hundreds of newspapers are organized under § 501(c)(3), and yet many openly endorse political candidates. Others make statements about political candidates that constitute forbidden statements under the IRS’ interpretation of the statutory prohibition against supporting or opposing candidates. Plaintiffs believe that nonprofit newspapers have a clear constitutional right to make such endorsements or statements. Plaintiffs simply contend that they should also have the same freedom of speech.
6. The IRS has formally recognized the right of college newspapers (owned by colleges that are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations) to publish endorsements for political candidates. Rev. Rul. 72-513, 1972-2 C.B. 246. While Plaintiffs contend that such newspapers should have such a right under the First Amendment, it is a denial of equal protection to interpret § 501(c)(3) to allow college newspapers to endorse candidates while prohibiting nonprofits like Plaintiffs from doing the same.

7. Many 501(c)(3) organizations engage in electoral activities that are open, obvious, and well-known, yet the IRS allows some, but not all, such organizations to do so without penalty. Again, Plaintiffs believe that such churches have the constitutional right to engage in such participation; they simply want the same right for themselves.
8. There is no apparent rational basis for determining which 501(c)(3) organizations will be permitted to proceed, and which will be penalized for violating the Johnson Amendment. The IRS acts in an arbitrary and capricious manner vis-à-vis electoral statements by nonprofit organizations.
9. The IRS operates in a manner that disfavors conservative organizations and conservative, religious organizations in its enforcement of § 501(c)(3). This is a denial of both religious freedom and equal protection.
10. Plaintiffs are all religious nonprofit organizations in the business of communicating their views to the public. They regularly speak on a nearly infinite variety of topics and situations, believing that the Christian faith as taught in the Holy Bible speaks to every area of life. However, under the IRC as interpreted and enforced by the IRS, there is one area of life where they are not free to speak—to wit, their views about political candidates and issues.
11. Some Plaintiffs do not want to formally endorse or oppose political candidates. However, all Plaintiffs desire to communicate their views about candidates' positions that are relevant to the issues Plaintiffs care about. They would do so but for the Johnson Amendment. The IRS operates in a manner whereby the Plaintiffs are in jeopardy of punishment if they forthrightly say that a candidate's positions are unbiblical; or that another candidate's positions are consonant with biblical teaching. The Plaintiffs' speech is clearly chilled in this regard because they are not free to proclaim their views on the issues of the day and then

compare their views with the views of the candidates on these same issues. Yet, countless other entities that are similarly situated face no such restrictions by law, in some cases, or in practice, in others.

12. Plaintiffs have no adequate legal alternative to vindicate their rights to freely speak other than this proceeding. It is inappropriate to require them to disobey IRC rules and/or the IRS' interpretation of the IRC, as doing so requires them to risk their tax-exempt status if their challenge is unsuccessful.
13. Plaintiffs do not contend that the limitation on lobbying activity violates the First Amendment. Nor do they contend that their inability to directly donate to political candidates violates their First Amendment rights. Rather, they only seek a declaratory judgment and injunctive relief that they may use their regular means of communication to expound their views concerning political candidates who seek to represent them. Plaintiffs seek no relief from the operation of the Johnson Amendment outside of this context.
14. Plaintiffs contend that the Johnson Amendment, as written and as applied by the IRS, violates the First Amendment's Free Speech Clause, Free Exercise Clause, the Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause (Void for Vagueness), the Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause (Equal Protection), and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.
15. As with all fundamental rights, deprivation of those rights is irreparable injury per se. *Elrod v. Burns*, 427 U.S. 347, 373 (1976).

#### **JURISDICTION, VENUE & SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY**

16. Plaintiffs seek declaratory, injunctive, and other appropriate relief under the Declaratory Judgment Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201–02.



17. This Court has the authority to grant such relief to Plaintiffs under the Declaratory Judgment Act, 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201–02; the Constitution of the United States; and the Court’s inherent equitable powers.
18. This Court has subject-matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 because this action arises under the U.S. Constitution and federal law. Specifically, this Court has subject-matter jurisdiction to determine if a law of Congress violates the Constitution of the United States as applied to Plaintiffs.
19. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1346(a) because this is a civil action against the United States.
20. An actual controversy exists between the parties within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 2201(a).
21. Venue is proper in this District under 28 U.S.C. § 1391, including paragraph (e).
22. Defendants are an officer of the United States and an agency of the United States, acting in their official capacities or under color of legal authority.
23. Plaintiff Sand Springs Church is located in Athens (Henderson County), Texas. First Baptist Church Waskom is located in Waskom, Texas. Both churches are located within the Eastern District of Texas. Sand Springs Church is located within the Tyler Division of the District. Venue is therefore proper within this district under 28 U.S.C. § 1391, including paragraph (e).
24. Plaintiffs seek relief from the Defendants in that one or more of the following is true:
  - (1) actions taken by the IRS are beyond their statutory powers, (i.e., the discriminatory practices of the IRS are alleged below)
  - (2) the powers themselves are constitutionally void, that is, that the Johnson Amendment is unconstitutional on its face, or
  - (3) the manner in which the IRS administers the Johnson Amendment is constitutionally

void, that is that the Johnson Amendment is unconstitutional as applied to Plaintiffs and administered by the IRS.

25. Sovereign immunity has been waived by the United States in 5 U.S.C. § 702, the Administrative Procedures Act, which contains a general waiver of sovereign immunity for cases seeking non-monetary relief. “Congress intended to waive immunity for non-statutory causes of action against federal agencies arising under 28 U.S.C. § 1331.” *Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas v. United States*, 757 F.3d 484, 488 (5th Cir. 2014). Plaintiffs do not seek monetary relief, the actions of the Defendants are under color of law, and plaintiffs have suffered an injury as a result of such actions. The criteria for waiver of sovereign immunity under this statute are fully met.
26. The United Supreme Court held that there are two primary exceptions to Sovereign Immunity: Case which challenge an “(1) action by officers beyond their statutory powers and (2) even though within the scope of their authority, the powers themselves or the manner in which they are exercised are constitutionally void.” *Dugan v. Rank*, 372 U.S. 609, 621-622 (1963 (relying upon *Larson v. Domestic Foreign Corp.*, 337 U.S. 682, 701-702 (1949)). See also, *Danos v. Jones*, 652 F.3d 577, 582 (5th Cir. 2011). These exceptions are applicable here.
27. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act contains a waiver of sovereign immunity. Plaintiffs’ claims under that Act are likewise unhindered by the doctrine of sovereign immunity.

## **PARTIES**

28. Plaintiff National Religious Broadcasters is a nonprofit corporation with tax exempt status under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. National Religious Broadcasters is located in Washington, DC.

29. Plaintiff Sand Springs Church is a nonprofit corporation with tax exempt status under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Sand Springs Church is located in Athens, Texas.
30. Plaintiff First Baptist Church Waskom is a nonprofit corporation with tax exempt status under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. First Baptist Church Waskom is located in Waskom, Texas.
31. Plaintiff Intercessors for America is a nonprofit corporation with tax exempt status under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Intercessors for America is located in Purcellville, Virginia.
32. Defendant Danny Werfel is the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service. He has the responsibility of enforcing the tax laws of the United States, including § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. His office is in Washington, DC, and he is sued solely in his official capacity.
33. Defendant the Internal Revenue Service is an agency of the government of the United States with the responsibility for enforcing the Internal Revenue Code, including § 501(c)(3).

### **STANDING**

34. As described with more particularity below, Plaintiffs have suffered “an injury in fact” and have shown that there is a “sufficient causal connection” between the Johnson Amendment, as written and as applied by the IRS, and that the injury “will be redressed by a favorable decision.” *Glass v. Paxton*, 900 F.3d 233, 238 (5th Cir. 2018). “Nothing in this Court's decisions requires a plaintiff who wishes to challenge the constitutionality of a law to confess that he will in fact violate that law.” *Susan B. Anthony List v. Driehaus*, 573 U.S. 149, 163 (2014).
35. This case arises under the First Amendment, and Plaintiffs’ central claim is that their right to speak freely about political candidates and issues are being improperly chilled by the

Johnson Amendment, as written and as enforced by the IRS. They are subject to sanction by the IRS for any violation of the Johnson Amendment. “[S]tanding rules are relaxed for First Amendment cases so that citizens whose speech might otherwise be chilled by fear of sanction can prospectively seek relief.” *Nat’l Press Photographers Ass’n v. McCraw*, 90 F.4th 770, 782 (5th Cir. 2024); “[t]he First Amendment challenge has unique standing issues because of the chilling effect, self-censorship, and in fact the very special nature of political speech itself.’ It is not hard to sustain standing for a pre-enforcement challenge in the highly sensitive area of public regulations governing bedrock political speech.” *Speech First, Inc. v. Fenves*, 979 F.3d 319, 331 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2020).

36. None of the Plaintiffs have heretofore violated the Johnson Amendment, but all have engaged in self-censorship to avoid doing so and incurring the commensurate penalties provided in the IRC. “In pre-enforcement cases alleging a violation of the First Amendment’s Free Speech Clause, the Supreme Court has recognized that chilled speech or self-censorship is an injury sufficient to confer standing.” *Nat’l Press Photographers Ass’n v. McCraw*, 90 F.4th 770, 782 (5th Cir. 2024). “Because [Plaintiffs] intended future conduct concerns political speech, it is certainly ‘affected with a constitutional interest.’ . . . [T]he constitutional guarantee has its fullest and most urgent application precisely to the conduct of campaigns for political office.” *Susan B. Anthony List v. Driehaus*, 573 U.S. 149, 162 (2014). This satisfies the first standing requirement to demonstrate that there is an injury in fact.

37. Plaintiff National Religious Broadcasters would take the following actions but for the fact that the Johnson Amendment would threaten their nonprofit status or subject them to other penalties within the Internal Revenue Code, and *will* take these actions if they prevail in

this litigation:

- NRB would identify a narrow range of issues concerning religious freedom, freedom of speech and the press, moral issues, and issues of special concern to broadcasters.
- NRB would publish their views on this set of issues making it clear to its members which views it supports and which it opposes.
- NRB would publish the views of federal candidates for the President, Senate, and House of Representatives on this selection of issues.
- NRB would compare its views with the views of the candidates, clearly identifying which candidates take positions supporting NRB's views and which candidates oppose its views. All of this would be done on an issue by issue basis.
- If the views of the individual candidates are unknown, then to the extent possible, NRB would use the positions found in the platform of the political party to which the candidate belongs as the means of making the above-described comparisons.
- NRB would urge their members to vote, and to do so in line with the issues which best align with the values of each member as enlightened by the candidate information furnished by NRB.
- NRB would invite candidates for federal office to address its annual convention. NRB has done this in the past, but in compliance with the Johnson Amendment has invited all candidates for the same office (provided that they have a certain level of public support, e.g. 5% or more in national polls). Henceforth, NRB would only invite candidates whose views align with those of NRB. NRB would announce to its audience that the candidates so appearing align with its views.
- NRB would do all of these things in close proximity to the election in question.

38. Plaintiff Sand Springs Church would take the following actions but for the fact that the Johnson Amendment would threaten their nonprofit status or subject them to other penalties within the Internal Revenue Code, and *will* take these actions if they prevail in this litigation:

- The pastor of Sand Springs Church would deliver one or more sermons at the regular Sunday services of the church in which he would discuss political issues and the stands taken by the major candidates nationally and in the church's general area in light of the principles, teachings, and dictates of the Bible as described more particularly in the following sub-paragraphs.
- The pastor would identify a specific and narrow set of issues that are of special importance to the people of his church considering their biblically-grounded faith. Such issues are generally referred to as moral issues and liberty issues such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and the rights of parents to raise their children according to their faith traditions and beliefs.
- The pastor would make clear what the Bible teaches on each of these issues and the church's preferred application of these biblical principles to the current issues of the day that match each of the topics.
- The pastor would also compare the views of each of the relevant candidates and/or the major political parties making it clear which candidates/parties views align with those of the church and which do not.
- The pastor would urge the congregation to vote and to do so in accordance with the principles and viewpoints that have just been described.
- Candidates for state and local offices would be invited to appear at the church's Sunday morning worship service in close proximity to the relevant election. Only

those candidates whose positions substantially align with those of the church would be invited and introduced. The congregation would be told the name of the candidate, what office they seek, that the church is confident that their views align with those of the church. The congregation would be encouraged to keep this alignment in mind as they vote.

- This would all be done in close proximity to the election.

39. Plaintiff First Baptist Church of Waskom would take the following actions but for the fact that the Johnson Amendment would threaten their nonprofit status or subject them to other penalties within the Internal Revenue, and *will* take these actions if they prevail in this litigation:

- The pastor of First Baptist Church of Waskom would deliver one or more sermons at the regular Sunday services of the church in which he would discuss political issues and the stands taken by the major candidates nationally and in the church's general area in light of the principles, teachings, and dictates of the Bible as described more particularly in the following sub-paragraphs.
- The pastor would identify a specific and narrow set of issues that are of special importance to the people of his church considering their biblically-grounded faith. Such issues are generally referred to as moral issues and liberty issues such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and the rights of parents to raise their children according to their faith traditions and beliefs.
- The pastor would make clear what the Bible teaches on each of these issues and the church's preferred application of these biblical principles to the current issues of the day that match each of the topics.

- The pastor would also compare the views of each of the relevant candidates and/or the major political parties making it clear which candidates/parties views align with those of the church and which do not.
- The pastor would urge the congregation to vote and to do so in accordance with the principles and viewpoints that have just been described.
- Candidates for state and local offices would be invited to appear at the church's Sunday morning worship service in close proximity to the relevant election. Only those candidates whose positions substantially align with those of the church would be invited and introduced. The congregation would be told the name of the candidate, what office they seek, that the church is confident that their views align with those of the church. The congregation would be encouraged to keep this alignment in mind as they vote.
- This would all be done in close proximity to the election.

40. Plaintiff Intercessors for America (IFA) would take the following actions but for the fact that the Johnson Amendment would threaten their nonprofit status or subject them to other penalties within the Internal Revenue Code, and *will* take these actions if they prevail in this litigation:

- IFA would continue publishing voter guides for presidential elections as it has done at various times for the past 50 years. IFA's voter guide for the past two elections are attached hereto as Exhibits A and B.
- IFA would, however, change their voter guides to make some changes from their prior publications. Specifically, IFA would now make clear statements about the various issues covered that clearly communicates the preferred view of IFA on each



of the issues discussed.

- IFA's voter guides would address a narrow set of moral issues and issues related to religious freedom.
- IFA's voter guides would make clear statements as to its biblical beliefs on the correct approach to each of these issues.
- IFA's voter guides will publish the views of the presidential candidates on each of the identified issues.
- IFA's voter guides will clearly compare its preferred view with the view of each of the presidential candidates.
- IFA will issue its voter guides principally through churches all over the nation in close proximity to the presidential election.
- IFA's voter guides would urge all those reading the guides to vote in accordance with the positions described by IFA.

41. Plaintiffs have suffered an injury in fact if they (1) have an intention to engage in a course of conduct arguably affected with a constitutional interest, (2) their intended future conduct is proscribed by Johnson Amendment, and (3) the threat of future enforcement of the Johnson Amendment is substantial as outlined herein. *Speech First, Inc. v. Fenves*, 979 F.3d 319 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2020).

42. The text of the Johnson Amendment and its enforcement by the Defendants, as described more particularly below, are the causes of the chilling of Plaintiffs' speech and the other constitutional violations as alleged below. This satisfies the second standing requirement to demonstrate that there is a sufficient causal connection between the actions of the Defendants and the injury suffered by the Plaintiffs.

43. The Johnson Amendment is actively enforced by the IRS. Its website contains strong

warnings to relevant nonprofits to avoid violating its provisions. Moreover, “[r]egarding this third [standing] requirement, when dealing with pre-enforcement challenges to recently enacted (or, at least, non-moribund) statutes that facially restrict expressive activity by the class to which the plaintiff belongs, courts will assume a credible threat of prosecution in the absence of compelling contrary evidence.” *Barilla v. City of Houston, Texas*, 13 F.4th 427, 431–32 (5th Cir. 2021).

### FACTS

44. Title 26, § 501(c)(3) of the United States Code provides as follows:

Corporations, and any community chest, fund, or foundation, organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary, or educational purposes, or to foster national or international amateur sports competition (but only if no part of its activities involve the provision of athletic facilities or equipment), or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals, no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual, no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation (except as otherwise provided in subsection (h)), **and which does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.** (Emphasis added).

45. The bolded language in said statute was added by Senator Lyndon Johnson in 1954 (although it was slightly amended later). This portion of this section is widely known as the Johnson Amendment, and it is this portion that is challenged in this litigation.
46. Insofar as this section prohibits nonprofit organizations organized under § 501(c)(3) from

speaking freely about political candidates, it is a violation of the First Amendment's protection of freedom of speech. The political speech prohibited is core protected speech under the First Amendment, and there is no compelling governmental interest that justifies this limitation of constitutional freedom.

47. Plaintiffs have not "participated in," or "intervened in," or "published or distributed any statement" in "any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office." Nor have Plaintiffs knowingly violated any regulation or interpretation of the IRS vis-à-vis the Johnson Amendment. No adverse action of any kind by the IRS is pending against any Plaintiff, because Plaintiffs have censored their own speech to avoid incurring any sanction by the IRS.
48. The IRS has sanctioned Cornerstone Chapel, another 501(c)(3) organization, for violating the Johnson Amendment. See, Paragraph 100. One of the factors it used in reaching this conclusion was that said organization distributed a voting guide produced by Plaintiff Intercessors for America. There was no determination that Intercessors for America violated the Johnson Amendment, and there is no action pending between the IRS and this Plaintiff.
49. Each Plaintiff is constrained from speaking freely about political candidates by the Johnson Amendment and by the arbitrary and capricious interpretation and enforcement by the IRS. Each Plaintiff desires the freedom to discuss political candidates and their fidelity to Plaintiffs' interests and values. Plaintiffs' speech has been unconstitutionally chilled by both the Johnson Amendment and its arbitrary interpretation and enforcement.
50. For example, Plaintiff National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) is engaged in a major effort in Congress to ensure that automobile manufacturers do not eliminate AM radios from their cars and trucks. Members of Congress have taken positions on their support or opposition to the NRB position on this issue. NRB desires to communicate such information to its

members encouraging them to remember this fact when voting. However, because of the Johnson Amendment and the uncertainty surrounding its enforcement, Plaintiff NRB is unable to encourage its members or the public to vote for congressional candidates who support AM radio, or to vote against candidates who side with the automobile manufacturers. Yet, automobile manufacturers are free to publicly support or oppose candidates based on their positions on this, or any other issue of interest to them. Plaintiffs' speech has been chilled in this and countless other similar manners.

51. All Plaintiffs are Christian organizations that embrace a biblical worldview, which includes the belief that every aspect of life is subject to the jurisdiction and standards of God as set forth in the Bible. There are no areas of life that are outside of God and His standards. This includes political issues. To faithfully carry out each of their respective ministries, each Plaintiff believes it has a duty before God to teach what the Word of God says about every issue of life, and to apply such teaching in practical ways rather than speaking in merely theoretical terms. In fact, the Book of James teaches that it is a sin for a person to know the right thing to do but to fail to do it. James 4:17.
52. Moreover, the Book of Hosea teaches that Israel was punished for "setting up" kings and making princes without God's permission. Hosea 8:4. In Deuteronomy 17:14 et seq., God set forth standards for choosing kings in Israel. The people were taught to choose kings who did not deviate either to the right or to the left of God's standards. Although these passages were written literally to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, the New Testament teaches that all Scripture is given by God and is profitable for enabling every believer to do good works. 2 Timothy 3:16. Plaintiffs believe this means that the prescriptions of the Old Testament concerning the duty to follow God's standards in the selection of a political leader are applicable by principle to Christians today. Accordingly, Plaintiffs believe that every

Christian has a duty to vote in accordance with the standards of God's Word. Plaintiffs believe that they have a duty to teach the full counsel of the Word of God, and to declare when candidates have deviated from the right or the left of God's standards. Plaintiffs cannot do so without fear of punishment from the IRS.

53. But for the Johnson Amendment and its arbitrary enforcement, each Plaintiff would engage in speech that clearly states the positions of candidates on issues, while at the same time teaching the standards of the Word of God on such issues. This comparison—the standards of the Word of God vis-à-vis the position of candidates on the same issues—is deemed by the IRS to constitute support or opposition to candidates in violation of the Johnson Amendment.

**IRS's Arbitrary and Capricious Enforcement  
of the Johnson Amendment**

**NEWSPAPERS**

54. In addition to its power of audit, § 6852 of the Internal Revenue Code provides that if the IRS determines that an organization has violated the Johnson Amendment, the Service may immediately determine the amount of income and § 4955 tax due. Moreover, § 7409 grants the IRS the power to seek an injunction against an exempt organization that flagrantly violates the political campaign prohibition to prevent further political expenditures by the organization.
55. Despite this authority, the IRS routinely allows favored organizations to openly and notoriously violate the Johnson Amendment.
56. There are hundreds of newspapers that are owned by and operated as nonprofits under § 501(c)(3). Many such newspapers routinely endorse political candidates.
57. Upon information and belief, the IRS has never enforced the Johnson Amendment against a

nonprofit newspaper.

58. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* is the largest newspaper in the nation owned by a § 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the Lenfest Institute. “*The Philadelphia Inquirer* is the largest American newspaper owned by a nonprofit and dedicated to public service. The Lenfest Institute is joined by thousands of individual donors in supporting investigative journalism, diversity, and product innovation at The Inquirer.” <https://www.lenfestinstitute.org/our-work/the-philadelphia-inquirer/>.
59. Its own website (<https://www.lenfestinstitute.org/our-work/the-philadelphia-inquirer/>) further describes *The Philadelphia Inquirer*’s ownership and operation as follows:

**Inquirer ownership**

The Lenfest Institute for Journalism is a non-profit LLC formed for charitable and educational purposes. The Institute is *The Inquirer*’s non-controlling majority shareholder.

The Institute is an affiliate of The Lenfest Institute for Journalism Special Asset Fund of Philadelphia Foundation (Formerly The Philadelphia Foundation Special Assets Fund), a tax-exempt organization under the Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) and a public charity. Neither The Institute nor TPF control *The Inquirer*. Instead, The Inquirer’s Board of Directors is responsible for operational and key decision-making. The Inquirer remains a for-profit business, a “B-Corp” or Public Benefit Corporation.

Although the Institute technically owns *The Inquirer*, under the legal structure—and to protect its editorial independence – *The Inquirer* operates independently under its current management team and its Board of Directors.

The Institute owns 9,999 non-voting shares in *The Inquirer*. The charitable

Inquirer Trust holds the one voting share of stock of *The Inquirer*. The trustees of the charitable trust are the same as the members of the Board of Directors of *The Inquirer*. The purpose of the charitable trust was to vest control of *The Inquirer* in the hands of its Board of Directors so as to ensure it would be operated independently from the Institute and maintain editorial independence.

The Institute's Board of Managers governs the tax-exempt mission of the Institute. Although inherently connected to *The Inquirer*, these are independent bodies with independent missions and independent responsibilities.

60. Thus, the Lenfest Institute is a 501(c)(3) organization that uses its money to fund the publication of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, in turn, regularly issues formal endorsements for political candidates, almost always members of the Democratic Party. Its endorsements in the 2024 primary election can be found here: <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/editorials/inq2/inquirers-2024-primary-endorsement-guide-20240419.html>. Its endorsements for 2023 can be found here: <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/inq2/2023-general-election-endorsements-20231021.html>. Its endorsements for 2022 can be found here: <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/inq2/2022-election-pennsylvania-endorsements-guide-20221009.html>.
61. The Lenfest Institute uses its nonprofit resources to publish a newspaper that endorses political candidates. Despite its elaborate corporate structure, there is no doubt that a nonprofit is funding a newspaper that endorses political candidates. This clearly violates the Johnson Amendment. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.
62. The Positive Futures Network is a 501(c)(3) organization that owns Yes!Media which publishes *Yes!Magazine*. [About YES! - YES! Magazine Solutions Journalism](#)

[yesmagazine.org](http://yesmagazine.org)). This online news source endorsed Bernie Sanders for president in 2016 in the Democratic primary and explicitly said “A Trump presidency would be a climate disaster.” [Choosing a President in a Time of Climate Crisis - YES! Magazine Solutions Journalism](#) ([yesmagazine.org](http://yesmagazine.org)).

The IRS allowed this unlawful activity to proceed unhindered.

63. *Witness LA* is an online newspaper that solicits tax-deductible contributions “through Community Partners, our fiscal sponsor.” [Support WitnessLA](#). It issued endorsements in the 2012 election for Congress, District Attorney, and President (“OH, YEAH, AND FOR THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, WE RECOMMEND: **Barak Obama**. (But you probably knew that.”)) (Emphasis in original.) [The WitnessLA November 2012 Elections Endorsements](#). The IRS allowed this to proceed unhindered.
64. Real News Project, Inc., is 501(c)(3) organization that publishes *WhoWhatWhy*—an online newspaper. It takes a position on elections that clearly violates the Johnson Amendment’s prohibitions on making statements that support or oppose candidates. For example, in the runup to the 2016 election, *WhoWhatWhy* published a long anti-Donald Trump article (<https://whowhatwhy.org/opinion/editorial-donald-trump/>) which included the following:

Like it or not, Trump is as much an American as Martin Luther King. If it hadn’t been for people like Trump in the past, there would have been no need for people like King. You cannot wash racism, ignorance and demagoguery out of American history...It is fatuous to say Trump is “not who we are.” He is who many of us were in the era of slavery and lynching, and who many of us are in the era of police shootings and Islamophobia.

All I can say about Trump is what Mark Twain is alleged to have said about the Jews: “Jews are part of the human race. Worse than that, I cannot say of them.”



The fears Trump stokes are our own. Democracy is ever at risk from demagogues and would-be “strong men.” The test is whether we succumb to their blandishments, or whether we offer allegiance to those who summon what Abraham Lincoln called “the better angels of our nature.”

In the runup to the 2024 election it published another anti-Trump article ([Donald Trump: Political Force or Political Farce? - WhoWhatWhy](#)) that included the following:

It’s like that with Trump. Obviously, people should be afraid of a malignant narcissist who leads a cult of heavily armed, gullible idiots. That’s a scary prospect... and it’s going to be a problem for as long as he is around.

As a result, the danger he poses to democracy and stability in the US is also very real... and of course it would be amplified if he ever returned to the White House again.

The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

65. Growing Community Media is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the *Wednesday Journal of Oak Park and River Forest*. [Growing Community Media NFP \(neoncrm.com\)](#). It publishes many anti-Trump articles including one that contained the following, dated July 19, 2024: <https://www.oakpark.com/2024/07/16/thoughts-and-prayers-for-donald-trump/>:

You didn’t deserve to be shot, but you do deserve to be defeated at the polls in November, and I don’t want you to die because I want you to experience that defeat. It’s the only way to kill (if you’ll excuse that violent phrasing) the authoritarian, anti-democratic movement you represent. Killing a person doesn’t kill off an ideology, even one as reprehensible as yours.

The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

66. Washington Monthly is a 501(c)(3) organization. <https://washingtonmonthly.com/about/>. A

staff writer for this online news source endorsed Kamala Harris for president in the 2024 election prior to President Biden's withdrawal. The piece was published on July 11, 2024, and explicitly said "[o]nly one person can build on the administration's accomplishments, have unfettered access to funds and ballot lines, and do so without wasting precious time. Her name is Kamala Harris." <https://washingtonmonthly.com/2024/07/11/im-a-dnc-member-and-a-public-opinion-professional-its-highly-unlikely-biden-can-win/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

67. Subsequent to Biden's withdrawal, the Washington Monthly published a second endorsement article by one of its editors. Here is another endorsement article for Kamala Harris for president from the Washington Monthly. This piece was published on July 22, 2024, and said "[f]ortunately, Biden was able to recognize his limitations, stand down, and lift Harris up. His Number Two, with sharper communication skills, has the ability to defend the record of the last four years and erode the rhetorical foundation of Trump's comeback campaign.
68. At the risk of being excessively optimistic amid an exhilarating moment, I believe the former prosecutor can set the economic record straight. If she does, the presidential election won't be all that close." <https://washingtonmonthly.com/2024/07/22/kamala-can-correct-trumps-tallest-tale/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.
69. The Red & Black Publishing Company, Inc is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes The Red & Black. [https://www.redandblack.com/site/about\\_the\\_redblack.html](https://www.redandblack.com/site/about_the_redblack.html). This online news source explicitly endorsed Stacey Abrams on October 25, 2018, and said "ENDORSEMENT: Athens and UGA need Stacey Abrams as governor." <https://www.redandblack.com/opinion/endorsement-athens-and-uga-need-stacey-abrams->

- [as-governor/article\\_8907626c-d7cf-11e8-8898-6fb2ff2111b4.html](#). The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.
70. Capital Region Community Media Inc is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, The Bridge. <https://montpelierbridge.org/about/>. The Bridge published a piece on April 22, 2016 under a double byline. The first is Tom Brown identified as its contributing editor. The second is Thomas Mullholland, who is not further identified. This Opinion piece explicitly endorsed Bernie Sanders as the democratic nominee. The piece said “[i]f Sanders is not nominated at the Democratic National Convention I will vote for him as a write-in candidate. To vote for Hillary Clinton is a disavowal of the revolution. This I will not do.” <https://montpelierbridge.org/2016/04/opinion-vote-for-bernie/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.
71. Forward Assoc Inc is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, Forward. <https://forward.com/about-us/>. The Forward published a piece on June 28, 2024 that expressly opposed presidential candidate, Donald Trump. The piece said “[i]n 2016, Trump’s outrageousness was rewarded with the presidency. Over the past four years, many of us have let fade the memory of the profound rot in our culture that followed his first term in office; the sense of rot we felt in our own souls. This time, we cannot treat his lies with the same cavalier attitude. We owe it to the U.S. — and the world — to react.” <https://forward.com/opinion/628743/trumps-lies-debate-biden/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.
72. Street Sense Media is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, Street Sense Media. <https://streetsensemedia.org/about/>. Street Sense Media published a piece on April 29, 2020 that expressly endorsed Biden for president. It is written by Jeff Taylor who is identified as a vendor for Street Sense Media. The piece said that “[t]here’s a saying that,

much to my displeasure, rings true: Republicans fall in line, Democrats fall in love. This November there will undoubtedly be some Democrats who aren't in love with Joe Biden. I'm here to say to them, "Get over yourself and do what needs to be done to quite literally save the world. Vote for Joe Biden." But I suspect the vast majority of Democrats (and others) will be excited to do so, especially after Obama, Warren, and yes, Sanders, among others, help them to fully understand that everything, and I mean EVERYTHING is at stake!" <https://streetsensemedia.org/article/get-excited-for-president-biden/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

73. Stocktonia News Group Inc is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, Stocktonia News Service. <https://stocktonia.org/about/>. Stocktonia News Service published a piece on February 24, 2024 that strongly opposed one candidate, Tom Patti, in the primary election for mayor of Stockton. In somewhat milder terms, it opposed Christina Fugazi in the same six-way primary. The piece concluded, "Better still, select from the other mayoral candidates, Jesus Andrade, Jessica Velez, Shakeel Ahmad, and Dan Wright. They offer a choice between politicians with no toxic affiliations." <https://stocktonia.org/news/opinion/2024/02/24/its-the-corruption-stupid/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

74. The San Antonio Report is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, The San Antonio Report. <https://sanantonioreport.org/about-us-3/>. The San Antonio Report published a piece on December 24, 2023 that expressly condemned presidential candidate, Donald Trump. It was written by Robert Rivard who is identified as the co-founder of the San Antonio Report. The piece said that "[w]e are entering a presidential election year with the first state primaries one month away. Candidate Trump infamously has doubled down on his dehumanizing slander that immigrants are 'poisoning the blood of our country.' Those

are cruel words from a nativist whose mother and grandfather were immigrants. Two of his three wives were immigrants. Yet all were white, undoubtedly the telling difference for Trump in his contempt for the Mexicans he has vilified since he announced his candidacy for president at Trump Tower in 2015.” <https://sanantonioreport.org/a-nation-founded-by-immigrants-needs-to-safeguard-its-values/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

75. Patagonia Regional Times is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, Patagonia Regional Times. <https://patagoniaregionaltimes.org/about-us/>. This online news source published a piece by one of their contributors on February 1, 2023 that expressed condemnation of presidential candidate, Donald Trump. The piece said that “[n]obody’s never heard of Donald Trump. He clearly knows instinctively what every ad man knows: There’s no such thing as bad publicity. I’m not among his devotees, as you will know if you have read this rustic rag before. But there is no ignoring that he hates being ignored. He’s huge. So big that even we who think of Donald as a miscreant cannot deny his massive influence.” It continues: “When some ambitious psychopath just farts at decency, it stimulates the billion little pathogens out there, who, bored with waiting in the wings, and seeing what he gets away with based on The Big Lie, are hungry, antsy, and impatient to give it a try. We’re threatened with a vast pandemic now, more dangerous than Omicron can be, when copycats like Bolsonaro, Kari, Marjorie and Matt – along with Greasy Rudy and small, wormlike Lindsay Graham, will wag their crooked tongues and hawk their sick, corrosive lies, and see it as success if true democracy just dies.”

<https://patagoniaregionaltimes.org/life-among-the-humans-none-of-your-rules-apply-to-me/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

76. Kentucky Center for Public Service Journalism is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, The NKyTribune. <https://nkytribune.com/who-we-are-2/>. This online

news source published a piece in April 2024 (no specified date given in article beyond month and year) that condemned presidential candidate, Donald Trump. The piece said that “[i]n a weird way, it doesn’t much matter what Trump has done in the past. What is frightening is what he plans to do in the future if he returns to power — using the Justice Department to get revenge on his foes, initiating a more authoritarian government, implementing lessons he’s learned from his heroes Viktor Orban, the prime minister of Hungary, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the president of Turkey, further undermining the democratic process and destroying NATO, thus threatening world stability.” <https://nkytribune.com/2024/04/opinion-bill-straub-fathoming-the-unfathomable-is-just-incomprehensible-no-matter-how-you-look-at-it/>. The

IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

77. National Catholic Reporter is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, National Catholic Reporter. <https://www.ncronline.org/mission-and-values>. This news source published a piece on September 19, 2023 that condemned presidential candidate, Donald Trump. The piece said:

Here was new American politics where the lying, the language, the late-night TV show were being used to squeeze the concept of "Republic" out of the United States and turn it into a demagoguery minus a Senate-approved Cabinet. We had gotten ourselves a tiny little king. But how? Who was voting for him? Who would put someone like that — an accused liar, thief, rapist, egomaniac — into the highest office in the land? And why? Who would support this kind of political chicanery themselves? What kind of people — what kind of country — were we who would simply step aside and allow the walls of decency, dignity and public political values to collapse? And all of it with the kids of the nation in the room watching us and who now, as a result, had no political steel of the soul left to

admire. Living through this kind of presidency once is difficult enough. The very thought that this could become the tone of America's politics in the future is dizzying. Terrifying maybe: As in, bring on the guns. Stop the immigrants. Forget the allies. Dally with dictatorships. And you can forget "Invictus," too — "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul" — as you watch our democracy go slowly by."

<https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/ncr-voices/where-are-we-getting-our-values-these-days>.

The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

78. A second article from the National Catholic Reporter, published on July 8, 2024, that also condemned presidential candidate, Donald Trump and his potential presidential team. The article said that "Biden's opponent was combative and on message, even though almost every word out of his mouth was a lie. The president's performance made us sad; Donald Trump's performance was scary. Also scary are the people with whom the former president will surround himself if he returns to the White House. The presidency is not a single person; it is also all the people the president brings to the executive branch to run the government. Many of the experienced people who surrounded Trump in his first term have denounced him and endorsed Biden. The second Trump presidency will be filled with incompetent sycophants." <https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/old-president-and-old-pope>.

The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

79. Foundation for National Progress is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, Mother Jones. <https://www.motherjones.com/about/>. This news source published an article on May 31, 2023 that condemned Ron DeSantis as the Republican nominee. The piece said that "[i]t can feel pointless to fact-check a candidate who does not care that he's wrong. But in kicking off his campaign in this way, DeSantis is echoing the style and politics of the

man he seeks to supplant, Donald Trump, who began his own bid for president eight years ago by characterizing migrants who were crossing the southern border as “rapists.” Trump was lying then, but he told that lie because he meant it. This is not a trivial slip-up from DeSantis, either. It is a falsehood that expresses a truth: Whether your papers say you belong here is not the same thing as whether Ron DeSantis and his fans think you do.”

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2023/05/ron-desantis-cant-stop-smearing-asylum-seekers/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

80. Isthmus Community Media Inc is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, Isthmus. <https://isthmus.com/about>. This news source published an article on November 8, 2023 that expressly endorsed anyone but presidential candidate, Donald Trump. The piece said that “I have one goal for the election that will take place exactly a year from now: Make sure Donald Trump does not return to the White House.” <https://isthmus.com/opinion/citizen-dave/time-to-break-from-joe-biden/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.
81. Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting Inc is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, Investigate Midwest. <https://investigatemidwest.org/about/>. This news source published an article on March 27, 2024 that expressly condemned the presidential candidate, Donald Trump. The article said that “[f]armers should beware a second Trump term...Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. Don’t say you haven’t been warned.” <https://investigatemidwest.org/2024/03/27/farmers-should-beware-a-second-trump-term/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.
82. In These Times is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, In These Times. <https://inthesetimes.com/about>. This news source published an article on February 9, 2024 that expressly condemned presidential candidate, Donald Trump. The article said that



“Trump is trying to court union members by saying he’s a ‘friend’ to labor—but he’s actually a billionaire scab out to strip workers of their rights.” <https://inthesetimes.com/article/donald-trump-labor-union-teamsters-uaw>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

83. Highway58Herald.org is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, Highway 58 Herald. <https://highway58herald.org/about/>. This news source published an article on July 3, 2024 that expressly condemned presidential candidate, Donald Trump. The article said that “Joe Biden is a good man and he’s done a good job as president, but his showing in the debate was so shaky that I wish he would do the right thing and step aside. He’s too old, I’m sorry. The Dems have half a dozen potential candidates who would wipe the floor with Trump, who is — repeat after me — a vile, buffoonish con man, liar, braggart, cheat, fool, felon, groper and, worst of all, a traitor to democracy and to our Constitution.” <https://highway58herald.org/the-vengeful-old-rose-and-other-musings/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.
84. High Country News is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, High Country News. <https://www.hcn.org/about/>. The news source published an article on July 17, 2024 that expressly condemned presidential candidate, Donald Trump. The article said that “[g]iven everything Trump did — or tried to do — during his first term and since it ended, and given all he’s promised to do in the future, it’s hardly extreme or inflammatory to call on Americans to stand up and stop him.” <https://www.hcn.org/articles/who-is-spouting-violent-rhetoric/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.
85. El Tecolote is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, El Tecolote. <https://eltecolote.org/content/en/about/>. This news source published an article on October 27, 2021 that endorsed David Campos for California’s 17th Assembly District. The article

said that “David Campos’ experience, ideological conviction make him the best candidate for District 17 seat.” <https://eltecote.org/content/en/david-campos-experience-ideological-conviction-make-him-the-best-candidate-for-district-17-seat/>. The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

86. Latino Media Collaborative is a 501(c)(3) organization that publishes the online news source, CALÓ News. <https://www.calonews.com/site/about.html>. The news source published an article on November 1, 2022 that endorsed Karen Bass for LA mayor. The article said that “EDITORIAL: CALÓ NEWS endorses Karen Bass for LA mayor.” [https://www.calonews.com/news/politics/editorial-cal-news-endorses-karen-bass-for-la-mayor/article\\_40666526-c46d-5d76-91f7-128757550e36.html](https://www.calonews.com/news/politics/editorial-cal-news-endorses-karen-bass-for-la-mayor/article_40666526-c46d-5d76-91f7-128757550e36.html). The IRS allows this to proceed unhindered.

87. The IRS has issued a private letter ruling concerning the student newspaper at Northwestern University. The publications “include endorsement of political candidates in partisan campus races.” In addition, the newspaper “has plans to report in a similar manner off-campus elections.” The IRS concluded that such political endorsements for candidates in on-campus or off-campus races (i.e., races for government positions) were not in violation of the Johnson Amendment. <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/irs-letter-daily-northwestern>.

88. In Rev. Rul. 72-513, 1972-2 C.B. 246, the IRS determined that a student newspaper funded by a university operating under § 501(c)(3) did not violate the Johnson Amendment by virtue of the publication of endorsements for political office in such newspapers.

#### **DEMOCRATIC CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY IN CHURCHES**

89. On July 7, 2024, President Joseph Biden was the featured speaker at the Mount Airy Church

of God in Christ in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There is no doubt that this visit crossed the line established by the Johnson Amendment in multiple respects. For example:

- The church's board member leading prayer asked for God's blessing on President Biden in unobjectionable ways, but then said, "[o] God, bless each and every voter, to get out the vote, Jesus." And, later in the same prayer (concerning the people in the congregation), said, "[h]elp us to know what is going on politically so we can make the right decision."<sup>1</sup>
- The church's pastor delivered a lengthy sermon that laced numerous discussions about President Biden with various Scriptural passages, stories, and illustrations.
- The pastor began a series of comparisons between President Biden and Donald Trump, although the name Trump was never spoken.<sup>2</sup> There was no doubt of his meaning in any of these instances.
- The pastor said, "[t]his president doesn't sell Bibles, he actually reads the Bible."<sup>3</sup> This was a statement that clearly communicated that President Biden reads the Bible, a favorable fact, while former President Trump merely sells Bibles, an unfavorable fact. This comparison was deliberately made to communicate a favorable view of Biden and an unfavorable view of Trump, which was clearly understood by the audience.
- The pastor said, "[w]e need to challenge the notion that there are people on the conservative side of the political perspective who are right. We need to challenge that notion because you can't kill police officers on January 6 and be right...Our president is a man of love a man of compassion...[Regarding the pandemic] this man who brought us back to health, ...don't get amnesia and forget it was this man who took an economy

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<sup>1</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=1749> at 29:09 to 30:41.

<sup>2</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=3401> at 56:41-57:10.

<sup>3</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=3539> at 58:57-59:02.

that was on the ropes and brought us back to prosperity...we pray for you...we love you President Biden...be encouraged...”<sup>4</sup>

- Again, the pastor compared Biden and Trump in the June 2024 debate. “Our president is a man of vision and integrity. And since our president is right let us correct the record the notion that a few days ago during a debate he was accused of never having fired anybody. He fired the one who accused him of never firing anybody.”<sup>5</sup> The pastor said, “[l]et the record show that the election of 2020 was not stolen...What did happen was a call to Atlanta Georgia to find me 11,000 votes.”<sup>6</sup>
- The pastor said, “I don’t know why you want to make an issue of the President and his condition with stammering and not being able to bring forth words at certain times while another person lies fluently, and you never challenge his lies.”<sup>7</sup>
- In a sequence where the pastor challenged the “lies” of Trump and his political party, the pastor said (implicitly concerning his political party): “You are not the party of law, we are the party of law. We are the party of right. We are the party of law. We are the party of respect. We are the party of reconciliation. We have the big tent. We have genuine love for America.”<sup>8</sup>
- The pastor closed his sermon with a lengthy analogy between Joseph (of the coat of many colors in the Book of Genesis) and Joseph Biden. This long sequence was laced with the pastor leading the congregation in a chant of “Go Joseph,” sometimes referring to the Old Testament hero and sometimes referring to President Biden.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=3560> at 59:22-1:00:49.

<sup>5</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=3730> at 1:02:08-1:02:39.

<sup>6</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=3775> at 1:02:51-1:03:38.

<sup>7</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=3820> at 1:03:43-1:04:04.

<sup>8</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=3849> at 1:04:17-1:04:50.

<sup>9</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=4157> at 1:09:20-1:11:05.

- In this final sequence, the pastor closed his sermon saying, “[y]ou have a dream. I have a dream. The President has a dream of keeping America safe for four more years. A dream of keeping democracy safe. A dream of giving us prosperity. A dream of keeping us in peace. A dream of reducing hatred, racism, sexism, and bigotry. Joseph has a dream. If Joseph could get out of the pit, If Jesus could get out of the pit, President Biden is coming back. He’s a fighter, he’s a champion. He’s the comeback kid. Hallelujah. Let us pray.”<sup>10</sup>
- President Biden’s speech was a mixture of some Scripture verses, spiritual sayings, and clear political messaging on issues like student loans, the economy, and many other issues that were normal campaign rhetoric.
- President Biden ended his speech admonishing the congregation that he and the congregation should continue to “work together.”<sup>11</sup>

This church service, and other church services like it that promote Democratic candidates, are not challenged or limited in any fashion by the IRS.

90. On January 8, 2024, President Biden was the featured speaker at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. He was introduced by Representative Jim Clyburn in a lengthy and explicit political endorsement of Biden’s reelection. Among other things, Clyburn:

- Praised President Biden’s efforts to forgive student loans.<sup>12</sup>
- Asked the crowd who they wanted to oversee the program of student loan forgiveness, Biden or Trump? “Trump doesn’t even want the program.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=4268> at 1:11:08-1:14:48.

<sup>11</sup> <https://youtu.be/eANfPiAbWSM?t=4946> at 1:22:18-1:22:33.

<sup>12</sup> <https://youtu.be/ebT-nbVzJns?t=271> at 4:27-9:02.

<sup>13</sup> <https://youtu.be/ebT-nbVzJns?t=546> at 9:03-9:33.

- Condemned Trump’s nominees on the Supreme Court for reversing *Roe v. Wade*.<sup>14</sup>
- Praised President Biden for planning to preserve abortion rights.<sup>15</sup>
- Said, “It is with great pride that I present to you the man best qualified, the man totally committed to making every American a part of the American dream, Joe Biden.”<sup>16</sup>
- The congregation responded to this introduction with chants of “four more years.”<sup>17</sup>
- President Biden discussed several standard political issues, such as his healthcare and economic achievements, lacing his comments with statements like, “Trump is a loser.”<sup>18</sup>
- Biden ended his remarks in this South Carolina church with a statement that there was much work yet to be done and that “we need to keep the faith and do it together.”<sup>19</sup>

This church service, and other church services like it, that promote Democratic candidates are not challenged or limited in any fashion by the IRS.

91. A press release dated Sunday, January 5, 2020, issued by the Biden for President campaign indicated that “Vice President Biden Worshiped at Corinthian Baptist Church this morning.” The press release contained the following endorsement by this church’s Associate Minister, Rev. Rob Johnson:

After serving as Vice President for eight years, I believe Joe Biden has seen what it is going to take to be the President of the United States," said Rev. Rob Johnson Associate Minister in Des Moines. "Joe can tell voters not only what he wants to do, but what he's done — passed the Violence Against Women Act, banned assault weapons and helped get Obamacare across the finish line. The Vice

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<sup>14</sup> <https://youtu.be/ebT-nbVzJns?t=698> at 11:33-11:57.

<sup>15</sup> <https://youtu.be/ebT-nbVzJns?t=718> at 11:58-12:21.

<sup>16</sup> <https://youtu.be/ebT-nbVzJns?t=1210> at 20:06-20:25.

<sup>17</sup> <https://youtu.be/ebT-nbVzJns?t=1267> at 21:05-21:24.

<sup>18</sup> <https://youtu.be/ebT-nbVzJns?t=2133> at 35:33-35:46.

<sup>19</sup> <https://youtu.be/ebT-nbVzJns?t=3185> at 53:05-53:39.

President can empathize with folks and feel their pain. He knows what pain looks and feels like from his own experiences. When my nephews look at the President of the United States, I want them to find hope and see a leader they can look up to. In the next 29 days, I'm eager to help lead the Biden campaign's faith outreach efforts and speak with caucus-goers and people of Faith across the state about Joe's mission to restore the soul of this nation.

The press release also stated: "In helping to lead Biden for President's Iowa Faith Outreach efforts, Rev. Johnson will travel across the state and speak in churches about Biden's efforts to restore the soul of the nation and grow the middle class."<sup>20</sup>

This kind of promotion of Democratic campaigns in churches goes unhindered by the IRS.

92. On May 19, 2024, this same Rev. Kevin R. Johnson gave the message during the Pentecost Sunday Worship Service at Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City. Among many other statements that clearly violate the Johnson Amendment, the Rev. Johnson said:

Don't you know, beloved, that since 2021 Republican controlled state houses have passed a swarm of laws to restrict voting rights, increase penalties for public protest, and pose new restrictions on transgender youth and ban books...this is not the time for the church to not be united. While we are sitting up here doing other stuff, they are planning a 2025. This is not the time for the church to not be united. We've got to make sure the people get out and vote this November like never before. This is not the time...you can't turn your back on Biden because what are you turning your back to. Beloved, this is not the time. This is not the

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/biden-campaign-press-release-rev-rob-johnson-endorses-joe-biden-will-help-lead-campaigns>. Accessed August 8, 2024.

time.<sup>21</sup>

This kind of church service favoring Democratic candidates goes on unhindered by the IRS.

93. On January 15, 2023, President Biden spoke at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sen. Raphael Warnock introduced Biden by saying that he was “inspired by [Biden’s] lifelong commitment to service”<sup>22</sup> by the way “in which he has transformed his pain into power.”<sup>23</sup> Biden said:

- “This is the time of choosing. This is the time of choosing direct choices we have. Are we a people who will choose democracy over autocracy?”<sup>24</sup>
- “It is still the task of our time to make [Martin Luther King’s dream] a reality because it is not there yet.”<sup>25</sup>
- “That’s what I try to do every day—to build a future we all want.”<sup>26</sup>
- “But at this inflection point, we know that there is a lot of work that has to continue in economic justice, civil rights, voting rights, and protecting our democracy...”<sup>27</sup>
- That he has a bust of Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks in the Oval Office.<sup>28</sup>
- “My message to the nation on this day is we go forward. We go together...”<sup>29</sup>
- “May God bless you all and let’s go find the light. We can do this!”<sup>30</sup>

This kind of promotion of Democratic campaigns in churches goes unhindered by the IRS.

94. On September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Joe Biden, while a presidential candidate, spoke for about twenty

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<sup>21</sup> <https://youtu.be/jTYvPI25pMY?t=229> at 3:48-4:52.

<sup>22</sup> <https://youtu.be/Uf4wBIjVS40?t=44> at 0:47-0:54.

<sup>23</sup> <https://youtu.be/Uf4wBIjVS40?t=186> at 3:04-3:15.

<sup>24</sup> <https://youtu.be/Uf4wBIjVS40?t=1328> at 22:08-22:21.

<sup>25</sup> <https://youtu.be/Uf4wBIjVS40?t=1523> at 25:22-25:27.

<sup>26</sup> <https://youtu.be/Uf4wBIjVS40?t=1716> at 28:35-28:43.

<sup>27</sup> <https://youtu.be/Uf4wBIjVS40?t=1858> at 30:56-31:10.

<sup>28</sup> <https://youtu.be/Uf4wBIjVS40?t=1944> at 33:22-34:00.

<sup>29</sup> <https://youtu.be/Uf4wBIjVS40?t=2066> at 34:27 to 34:31.

<sup>30</sup> <https://youtu.be/Uf4wBIjVS40?t=2200> at 36:40 to 36:43.



minutes at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama as the church commemorated the bombing in 1963. Guest speaker Rev. Dr. Ruth Naomi Segres delivered the sermon. She spoke on the story of Job, then transitioned to the black experience during segregation in America, and then to the racism of the present day. “Keep the story alive!” she said. A young singer in the church sang a gospel song, and then Biden took the pulpit. His remarks included the following:

- Agreement with Segres that racism is still alive and that we need to fix it.
- “Now hate is on the rise again. We’re at a defining moment again in American history.”<sup>31</sup>
- “I know there is nothing we can’t accomplish if we stand together. Stand against hate. Stand for, what at best, our nation believes—honesty, decency, treating everyone with dignity and respect, giving everyone a fair shot, leaving nobody behind, giving hate no safe harbor, demonizing no one...and that’s why I believe so passionately that we have got to work to bring this country together.”<sup>32</sup>
- “So, my prayer to all of us this morning is that in this moment when our nation must again once decide who we are and what we stand for...and will choose once more to fight for our shared American dream.”<sup>33</sup>

This kind of promotion of Democratic campaigns in churches goes unhindered by the IRS.

95. On June 15, 2008, presidential candidate, Barack Obama, delivered the Father’s Day sermon for Apostolic Church of God in Chicago, Illinois. The pastor, Bishop Arthur Brazier, introduced future-President Obama as his “good friend who has changed the course of America.”<sup>34</sup> He added:

- Barack Obama loves people, cares about middle-class America, and is “a true patriot.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=531779430906778](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=531779430906778) at 48:46-48:54.

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=531779430906778](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=531779430906778) at 52:30-53:08.

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=531779430906778](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=531779430906778) at 55:43-56:12.

<sup>34</sup> <https://youtu.be/uPT2vsuD7lw?t=1063> at 17:42-18:02.

<sup>35</sup> <https://youtu.be/uPT2vsuD7lw?t=1104> at 18:20-18:58.

- “[Michelle Obama] is an outstanding woman, a true patriot, I have known both of them for years and they love their country, and they have been responsible for a monumental sea change in America.”<sup>36</sup>

Another pastor, Byron T. Brazier, introduced Obama as “a man who believes in change. Those of us, those who believe in God, believe in being born again, we know what change is...”<sup>37</sup>

President Obama’s message included the following:

- “Yes, we need fewer guns in the hands of people who shouldn’t have it. Yes, we need more money for our schools and more outstanding teachers in the classroom and more after school programs for our children. Yes, we need more jobs and more job training and more opportunity in our community. We know all that. That is why I am running for president of the United States of America.”<sup>38</sup>
- “What was interesting was how many people would come up to me and say ‘Barack, we love you man, we’re rooting for you, but we just don’t think that a black man can be elected president.’ I mean we had already defeated ourselves before we even started...”<sup>39</sup>
- “[Government] should be meeting [fathers] halfway. We should be making it easier for fathers who make responsible choices and harder for those who avoid them. We should get rid of the financial penalties we impose on married couples right now, and start making sure every dime of child support goes directly to helping children instead of bureaucrats...”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> <https://youtu.be/uPT2vsuD7lw?t=1308> at 21:52-22:07.

<sup>37</sup> <https://youtu.be/uPT2vsuD7lw?t=2958> at 49:20-49:40.

<sup>38</sup> <https://youtu.be/uPT2vsuD7lw?t=3662> at 1:01:03-1:01:25.

<sup>39</sup> <https://youtu.be/uPT2vsuD7lw?t=4170> at 1:09:30-1:09:48.

<sup>40</sup> <https://youtu.be/uPT2vsuD7lw?t=4572> at 1:16:12-1:16:33.

- “What kind of world am I leaving [my children]? Are we leaving them a country where there is a huge gap between a few people who are wealthy and a whole bunch of people who are struggling every day? Am I leaving them a country that’s still divided by race...am I leaving them a country where we’re hated around the world because we don’t cooperate with other nations...”<sup>41</sup>
- “If we rise up, if we have faith in the Lord, if we’re working hard, if we do what we must do as fathers, and as mothers, as grandfathers, and grandmothers, if we’re looking after our children, then I promise you better days are ahead. God’s going to lead us in a bright direction. God’s going to lead us in a better direction. God bless you all...pray for me. Pray for Michelle...”<sup>42</sup>

This kind of church service favoring Democratic candidates goes on unhindered by the IRS.

96. On March 13, 2016, presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, appeared as a guest speaker at Mount Zion Fellowship Church in Highland Hills, Ohio. Clinton entered to much applause and hugged the pastor, and they seemed to stand for a photo op.<sup>43</sup> The senior pastor, Ronald Williams II said to Clinton, “Secretary, no, we call those things that are not as though they are, Miss President.” This was meant as an acknowledgment that she would become president. Thunderous applause followed from the congregation.<sup>44</sup> Congresswoman Marcia Fudge, the pastor’s sister, introduced Clinton with several positive and supportive statements:

- I’m not just supporting her just because she is a Democrat. It is important to me that she is—no question about it. But I am supporting her because she understands me and all the

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<sup>41</sup> <https://youtu.be/uPT2vsuD7lw?t=4755> at 1:19:14-1:19:40.

<sup>42</sup> <https://youtu.be/uPT2vsuD7lw?t=4880> at 1:21:20-1:21:49.

<sup>43</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=1857> at 30:55-31:27.

<sup>44</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=2240> at 37:25-37:35.

people who are like me. We have to start voting for people who are going to make a difference in our lives.<sup>45</sup>

- “The person who is the best qualified candidate on either side of the aisle...”<sup>46</sup>
- Clinton then took the podium and began her speech, which included the following statements:
- [Referring to the congresswoman] “...and I can’t wait, if I’m so fortunate enough to be your president, working with her to make sure we get all the changes we all know we need.”<sup>47</sup>
- “I’m running for president because I want to knock down any barrier that stands in the way of any American getting ahead and staying ahead in our country.”<sup>48</sup>
- Praise for her husband’s presidency and policies, and criticism of the policies of her husband’s replacement.<sup>49</sup>
- “I don’t think President Obama gets the credit he deserves for digging us out of the ditch we were put into.” [Met with thunderous applause from congregation and pastor.]<sup>50</sup>
- Several instances of promoting her policies as she would at a campaign event.
- “I’m the only candidate who has laid out a comprehensive jobs program.”<sup>51</sup>
- “I want to be a small business president.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=2420> at 40:27-40:54.

<sup>46</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=2550> at 42:29-42:35.

<sup>47</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=2706> at 45:06-45:15.

<sup>48</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=2949> at 49:09-49:19.

<sup>49</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=3177> at 52:57-53:58.

<sup>50</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=3309> at 55:09-55:17.

<sup>51</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=3421> at 57:00-57:05.

<sup>52</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=3519> at 58:40-58:42.

- “I can’t get there without your help. I need your help, your support, your guidance, and your vote on Tuesday. And I promise you, if you will come vote for me, I will work my heart out every single day to make the changes we know we need.”<sup>53</sup>

The pastor then walked “the president” out of the service.<sup>54</sup>

This kind of church service favoring Democratic candidates goes on unhindered by the IRS.

97. Hillary Clinton spoke at Little Rock AME Zion Church in Charlotte, North Carolina on October 2, 2016. Her speech included the following:

- “We’ve got to take action. We’ve got to start now. Not tomorrow. Not next year. Now. We know we can’t solve all these problems overnight, which means we don’t have a moment to lose...so let’s hold on to a common vision. Let’s come together to make America a place where every child...has the chance to live up to their God-given potential.”<sup>55</sup>
- Endorsement of several of her policies throughout the speech.
- “Now there are some out there who see this as a moment to fan the flames of resentment and division, who want to exploit people’s fears even though it means tearing our nation even further apart. They say that all of our problems would be solved with more law and order as if the systemic racism plaguing our country doesn’t exist.”<sup>56</sup>
- “I want us to commit ourselves to this common vision. That is why I will build on the work that President Obama has done, and I will be sure that this is not just about a

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<sup>53</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=4212> at 1:10:12-1:10:40.

<sup>54</sup> <https://youtu.be/tMO7ETk1hdi?t=4250> at 1:10:55.

<sup>55</sup> <https://youtu.be/-EqZGZpOqjc?t=61> at 1:00-1:37.

<sup>56</sup> <https://youtu.be/-EqZGZpOqjc?t=369> at 6:10-6:40.

campaign or an election...these are issues I have been fighting for since I was a young lawyer...”<sup>57</sup>

- “We will not grow weary, and we will not lose heart. We will get up every single day, have faith in one another and in our future and work toward that better day for all of God’s people.”<sup>58</sup>

This kind of church service favoring Democratic candidates goes on unhindered by the IRS.

98. Plaintiffs believe that the activity described in the preceding paragraphs demonstrates ongoing, open, and obvious violations of the Johnson Amendment by churches friendly to Democratic candidates. However, Plaintiffs contend that all such activity is constitutionally protected. Plaintiffs only seek the freedom to engage in similar activity.

#### **IRS TARGETING CONSERVATIVE NONPROFITS FOR UNFAVORABLE TREATMENT**

99. On October 26, 2017, United States Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a settlement of two cases brought by groups of conservative political organizations against the IRS.<sup>59</sup> His statement included the following:

But it is now clear that during the last Administration, the IRS began using inappropriate criteria to screen applications for 501(c) status. These criteria included names such as “Tea Party,” “Patriots,” or “9/12” or policy positions concerning government spending or taxes, education of the public to “make America a better place to live,” or statements criticizing how the country was

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<sup>57</sup> <https://youtu.be/-EqZGZpOqjc?t=430> at 7:10-7:40.

<sup>58</sup> <https://youtu.be/-EqZGZpOqjc?t=609> at 10:10-10:28.

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-jeff-sessions-announces-department-justice-has-settled-plaintiff-groups>

being run. It is also clear these criteria disproportionately impacted conservative groups.

As a result of these criteria, the IRS transferred hundreds of applications to a specifically designated group of IRS agents for additional levels of review, questioning and delay. In many instances, the IRS then requested highly sensitive information from applicants, such as donor information, that was not needed to make a determination of tax-exempt status.

The IRS's use of these criteria as a basis for heightened scrutiny was wrong and should never have occurred. It is improper for the IRS to single out groups for different treatment based on their names or ideological positions. Any entitlement to tax exemption should be based on the activities of the organization and whether they fulfill requirements of the law, not the policy positions adopted by members, or the name chosen to reflect those views.

100. On October 18, 2020, Pastor Gary Hamrick of Cornerstone Chapel, Leesburg, Virginia preached an "election sermon" urging the congregation to vote and to vote consistent with the values set forth in the Bible. He compared the political platforms of the two major parties vis-à-vis their compatibility with the teachings of the Bible. He clearly stated that the Republican Platform was in greater alignment with the Bible than the Democratic Platform. And though he explicitly said that people "don't have to vote for Trump" to be in compliance with the Bible's standards, he made it clear that a vote for a Democratic candidate would be unbiblical in light of the content of that party's platform. Subsequently, the IRS began an enforcement action against Cornerstone Chapel because of implicit support or opposition of political candidates. The IRS levied and Cornerstone Chapel paid a tax penalty for violating the Johnson Amendment. Similar, and even more explicit examples of support or

opposition of candidates by 501(c)(3) nonprofits, go unchallenged by the IRS especially if the candidates in question are from the Democratic Party.

101. On June 18, 2021, the Internal Revenue Service issued a letter denying status under § 501(c)(3) to an organization called “Christians Engaged.” The specific reason given for the rejection was:

[Y]ou educate believers on national issues that are central to their belief in the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. Specifically, you educate Christians on what the bible says in areas where they can be instrumental in the areas of sanctity of life, the definition of marriage, biblical justice, freedom of speech, defense, and borders and immigration, U.S. and Israel relations. The bible teachings are typically affiliated with the [Republican] party and candidates. This disqualifies you from exemption under IRS Section 501(c)(3).

Although this denial was ultimately reversed, it is yet another example of the discriminatory practices of the IRS vis-à-vis conservative, particularly religiously conservative, organizations.

102. Upon information and belief, the IRS has continued its policy of political favoritism in its enforcement of the Johnson Amendment. Plaintiffs are aware of instances of recent investigations and adverse actions against conservative religious organizations under the Johnson Amendment. To Plaintiffs’ knowledge, no investigation, and particularly no adverse action, has ever been taken against any left-leaning or Democrat-affiliated nonprofit. The proportion of adverse actions taken against 501(c)(3) nonprofits skews disproportionately against conservative organizations. The IRS is enforcing the Johnson Amendment in a politically biased manner.



### INAPPLICABILITY OF THE ANTI-INJUNCTION ACT

103. In general, the Anti-Injunction Act (26 U.S.C.A. § 7421) (hereinafter, AIA) imposes a barrier to seeking equitable relief, whether an injunction or declaratory judgment, if the case involves any form of federal taxation. This case fits within one or more of the recognized exceptions to this rule.
104. The AIA does not apply “where the plaintiff has no alternative means to challenge the IRS's action.” *Z St. v. Koskinen*, 791 F.3d 24, 30 (D.C. Cir. 2015) citing *South Carolina v. Regan*, 465 U.S. 367 (1984).
105. Plaintiffs have not violated the Johnson Amendment but have chosen to censor their own speech to avoid its penalties. Unless and until Plaintiffs violate the Johnson Amendment and are subjected to adverse action by the IRS, they will be unable to challenge the constitutionality of the Johnson Amendment either facially or on an as-applied basis. Our legal system does not require Plaintiffs to put themselves at risk to determine their rights to freedom of speech, religion, due process, or equal protection.
106. In addition, the Plaintiffs’ claims herein have “no implications for tax collection” and this matter is thus exempt from the AIA. *Z St. v. Koskinen*, 791 F.3d 24, 30 (D.C. Cir. 2015) citing *Cohen v. United States*, 650 F.3d 717, 724 (D.C.Cir.2011) (en banc). If Plaintiffs prevail, they will be free to engage in political speech. If Plaintiffs do not prevail, they will not be free to engage in political speech and will continue to live under the regime of the Johnson Amendment, suffering its chilling effect on their core political and religious expression. In either case, no tax liability will be affected by the outcome of this litigation.
107. In addition, the AIA does not apply when “in administering the tax code, the IRS .... discriminate[s] on the basis of viewpoint.” *Z St. v. Koskinen*, 791 F.3d 24, 30 (D.C. Cir.

2015). Moreover, “[t]he tax code may not “discriminate invidiously” *True the Vote, Inc. v. Internal Revenue Serv.*, 831 F.3d 551, 560-61 (D.C. Cir. 2016) quoting *Regan v. Taxation with Representation of Wash.*, 461 U.S. 540, 548.

108. As previously alleged, the IRS has engaged in discriminatory treatment pertaining to freedom of speech and enforces the Johnson Amendment in a manner that constitutes a textbook example of invidious discrimination. Accordingly, the AIA is inapplicable to this case.
109. The anti-tax provision of the Declaratory Judgment Act, 22 U.S.C. § 2201, is interpreted “coterminously” with the Anti-Injunction Act. For the reasons just alleged, this action is not barred by the Declaratory Judgment Act.

## **CAUSES OF ACTION**

### **COUNT I – FIRST AMENDMENT - FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

110. Plaintiff relies on the allegations of all prior paragraphs, as if they were restated herein.
111. Political speech is “central to the meaning and purpose of the First Amendment.” *Citizens United v. Fed. Election Comm'n*, 558 U.S. 310, 329 (2010).
112. Plaintiffs are juridical persons who are entitled to constitutional protections including freedom of speech. Plaintiffs have been denied freedom of speech about political candidates by that portion of § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code known as the Johnson Amendment. This creates an unconstitutional restriction on the free speech rights of the Plaintiffs protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. “Political speech must prevail against laws that would suppress it, whether by design or inadvertence. Laws that burden political speech are subject to strict scrutiny, which requires the Government to prove that the restriction furthers a compelling interest and is narrowly tailored to achieve that interest.” *Citizens United v. Fed. Election Comm'n*, 558 U.S. 310,

340 (2010) (Cleaned up.)

113. It is no defense to say that the natural persons involved with the Plaintiffs have other avenues for speaking about candidates. These Plaintiffs, themselves, as legal persons, have the protected right of freedom of speech. *Citizens United, supra*.
114. The Johnson Amendment, as written, creates both a subject matter restriction and a speaker restriction on political speech in violation of the First Amendment. Nonprofits organized under § 501(c)(3) may not discuss the subject of political candidates for public office in a manner that is deemed to support or oppose such candidates. Only nonprofits organized under § 501(c)(3) are so silenced. All other forms of nonprofit organizations and all for-profit organizations are permitted to speak in a manner that supports or opposes political candidates. This includes nonprofits that operate primarily from tax-deductible membership dues. “The First Amendment stands against attempts to disfavor certain subjects or viewpoints. See, e.g., *United States v. Playboy Entertainment Group, Inc.*, 529 U.S. 803, 813 (2000) (striking down content-based restriction). Prohibited, too, are restrictions distinguishing among different speakers, allowing speech by some but not others. See *First Nat. Bank of Boston v. Bellotti*, 435 U.S. 765, 784 (1978). As instruments to censor, these categories are interrelated: Speech restrictions based on the identity of the speaker are all too often simply a means to control content.” *Citizens United v. Fed. Election Comm’n*, 558 U.S. 310, 340 (2010).
115. The Johnson Amendment, as arbitrarily and capriciously enforced by the IRS, additionally violates the Plaintiffs’ freedom of speech in that some 501(c)(3) nonprofits, such as newspapers and Democrat-leaning churches, are not restricted in their open support or opposition for political candidates, while others, including Plaintiffs, are told that they must obey the strictures of said Amendment. While the Johnson Amendment may be viewpoint-

neutral on its face, the IRS has applied and continues to apply it in a manner that discriminates against speakers based on viewpoint.

116. The violation of Plaintiffs’ First Amendment rights, both facially and as-applied, constitutes a *per se* irreparable injury entitling them to an injunction prohibiting the Defendants from enforcing the Johnson Amendment. *Franciscan Alliance, Inc. v. Becerra*, 47 F.4th 368, 380 (5th Cir. 2022).

**COUNT II – FIFTH AMENDMENT - DUE PROCESS—VOID FOR VAGUENESS**

117. Plaintiff relies on the allegations of all prior paragraphs, as if they were restated herein.
118. The Johnson Amendment, as enforced by the IRS, is void for vagueness in violation of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment. “Even when speech is not at issue, the void for vagueness doctrine addresses at least two connected but discrete due process concerns: first, that regulated parties should know what is required of them so they may act accordingly; second, precision and guidance are necessary so that those enforcing the law do not act in an arbitrary or discriminatory way. When speech is involved, rigorous adherence to those requirements is necessary to ensure that ambiguity does not chill protected speech.” *F.C.C. v. Fox Television Stations, Inc.*, 567 U.S. 239, 253–54 (2012).
119. The IRS repeatedly states that the Johnson Amendment is not capable of hard and fast rules but that its application depends on the “facts and circumstances” of each situation. “Certain activities or expenditures may not be prohibited depending on the facts and circumstances.” <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/the-restriction-of-political-campaign-intervention-by-section-501c3-tax-exempt-organizations>. This is the central operating rule of the IRS on the meaning of the Johnson Amendment.
120. While the IRS uses the “facts and circumstances” test in many other areas of tax law, this ambiguity is unconstitutional when it is used in the context of restrictions on the freedom of

speech because it allows the government to freely discriminate against speech based on viewpoint. By definition, a law that cannot be stated with precision in the area of speech restriction is void for vagueness.

121. Moreover, the Johnson Amendment is unconstitutionally void for vagueness in actual operation because some 501(c)(3) nonprofits (such as newspapers and Democrat-leaning churches) are permitted to routinely violate its provisions while the IRS warns others, including Plaintiffs, that they must obey its provisions.
122. These violations of Plaintiffs' Fifth Amendment rights constitute an irreparable injury for which there is no adequate remedy of law. They are entitled to injunctive relief prohibiting the Defendants from enforcing the Johnson Amendment.

### **COUNT III – FIRST AMENDMENT - FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION**

123. Plaintiff relies on the allegations of all prior paragraphs, as if they were restated herein.
124. Plaintiffs have a bona fide religious conviction that they must teach and preach about all areas of life. No area of life is exempt from the reach of Scripture. And teaching is not limited to generalized principles. Proper teaching includes a precise application of scriptural principles to every area of life.
125. This includes the spiritual duty to teach about issues of life that may arise in the public arena. Issues such as religious freedom, the right to life, racism, and the duties of parents to their children have obvious moral and spiritual implications, and each of these topics is also a current political topic that is treated in different manners by different political candidates.
126. Plaintiffs cannot fulfill their spiritual duties to teach the full counsel of the Word of God if they fail to address such issues and to inform their listeners how the views of various political candidates compare to the Bible's position on such matters. However, if they do both things, that is, teach what the Bible says and inform the public what a candidate believes on such an

issue, the IRS insists that such teaching violates the Johnson Amendment. Any such violation comes with the prospect of substantial penalties, including the loss of tax-exempt status for the organization.

127. Thus, the Johnson Amendment imposes a substantial burden on Plaintiffs' free exercise of religion.

128. As it pertains to churches, there is an additional violation of the Plaintiffs' right to the free exercise of religion.

129. Churches are placed in a unique and discriminatory status by the IRC Code. Under § 508(c)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code, churches need not apply to the IRS to obtain recognition of their 501(c)(3) status. The Code places them automatically within the ambit of 501(c)(3) and thereby silences their speech while providing no realistic alternative for operating in any other fashion. Churches have no choice; they are automatically silenced vis-à-vis political candidates.

130. The silencing of churches on political candidates is a substantial burden on their free exercise of religion.

131. The Plaintiffs' right to the free exercise of religion is protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. At a minimum, a regime of discriminatory enforcement that is motivated by religious animus violates the Free Exercise Clause.

132. The IRS enforces the Johnson Amendment, as alleged above, in a discriminatory manner, giving preference to speakers and viewpoints it prefers by refraining from enforcing the Johnson Amendment against them; while subjecting religious positions it disfavors to the realistic possibility of enforcement.

133. Under the controlling rule of *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), the Johnson Amendment, as written, is not a neutral rule of general applicability. It is not a

general rule because every form of juridical person other than 501(c)(3) nonprofits is able to support or oppose political candidates. This includes organizations that, like 501(c)(3) nonprofits, pay no organizational taxes themselves. It also includes organizations that have as a principal source of income membership revenue which is tax deductible as a business expense. Such organizations can either raise additional “clean” (i.e. non-deductible) donations for a campaign communication or inform their members to only deduct the proportion of their dues not attributable to such communications. None of these options are available to 501(c)(3) organizations. These are less restrictive alternatives that would bear on the constitutionality of the Johnson Amendment if such were available.

134. Additionally, the Johnson Amendment is not a neutral rule of general applicability as implemented and enforced by the IRS. The vast disparities previously identified demonstrate that some 501(c)(3) nonprofits are allowed to engage in campaign activity with impunity, while others, like Plaintiffs, are warned to not do so.
135. Moreover, churches have no choice. They are automatically silenced in a unique fashion, by virtue of a prior restraint. They are given no alternative form of organization since they are automatically exempt without application. This rule is neither general nor neutral. It is a narrow rule aimed specifically at churches and is thus unconstitutional in violation of the Free Exercise Clause.
136. These violations of the Plaintiffs’ free exercise rights constitute an irreparable injury *per se* entitling them injunctive relief prohibiting the Defendants from enforcing the Johnson Amendment. *Franciscan Alliance, Inc. v. Becerra*, 47 F.4th 368, 380 (5th Cir. 2022).

#### **COUNT IV – RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESTORATION ACT**

137. Plaintiff relies on the allegations of all prior paragraphs, as if they were restated herein.
138. Plaintiffs have a bona fide religious conviction that they must teach and preach about all

areas of life. No area of life is exempt from the reach of Scripture. And teaching is not limited to generalized principles. Proper teaching includes a precise application of scriptural principles to every area of life.

139. This includes the spiritual duty to teach about issues of life that may arise in the public arena. Issues such as religious freedom, the right to life, racism, and the duties of parents to their children have obvious moral and spiritual implications, and each of these topics is also a current political topic that is treated in different manners by different political candidates.
140. Plaintiffs cannot fulfill their spiritual duties to teach the full counsel of the Word of God if they fail to address such issues and to inform their listeners how the views of various political candidates compare to the Bible's position on such matters. However, if they do both things, that is, teach what the Bible says and inform the public what a candidate believes on such an issue, the IRS insists that such teaching violates the Johnson Amendment. Any such violation comes with the prospect of substantial penalties, including the loss of tax-exempt status for the organization.
141. Thus, the Johnson Amendment imposes a substantial burden on Plaintiffs' free exercise of religion.
142. As it pertains to churches, there is an additional violation of the Plaintiffs' right to the free exercise of religion.
143. Churches are placed in a unique and discriminatory status by the IRC Code. Under § 508(c)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code, churches need not apply to the IRS to obtain recognition of their 501(c)(3) status. The Code places them automatically within the ambit of 501(c)(3) and thereby silences their speech while providing no realistic alternative for operating in any other fashion. Churches have no choice; they are automatically silenced vis-à-vis political candidates.



144. The silencing of churches on political candidates is a substantial burden on their free exercise of religion.

145. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act 42 U.S § 2000bb-1 provides:

Government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability, except as provided in subsection (b).

(b)Exception

Government may substantially burden a person's exercise of religion only if it demonstrates that application of the burden to the person—

(1) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and

(2) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest.

146. The Johnson Amendment, as written, constitutes a substantial burden on the Plaintiffs' exercise of their religion in violation of RFRA. There is no compelling interest that justifies the restriction of the Plaintiffs' speech. Nor is the government's policy executed in the least restrictive means available.

147. The IRS enforces the Johnson Amendment, as alleged above, in a discriminatory manner, giving preference to speakers and viewpoints it prefers by refraining from enforcing the Johnson Amendment against them, while subjecting religious positions it disfavors to the realistic possibility of enforcement.

148. Moreover, churches have no choice. They are automatically silenced in a unique fashion, by virtue of a prior restraint. They are given no alternative form of organization since they are automatically exempt without application. This rule is neither general nor neutral. It is a narrow rule aimed specifically at churches and is thus unconstitutional in violation of the Free Exercise Clause.

149. These violations of the Plaintiffs’ rights protected by RFRA constitutes an irreparable injury per se entitling them injunctive relief prohibiting the Defendants from enforcing the Johnson Amendment. *Franciscan Alliance, Inc. v. Becerra*, 47 F.4th 368, 380 (5th Cir. 2022).

### **COUNT V – FIFTH AMENDMENT - EQUAL PROTECTION**

150. Plaintiff relies on the allegations of all prior paragraphs, as if they were restated herein.

151. Plaintiffs have been treated unequally by the Johnson Amendment, as written and as enforced by the IRS, in at least three ways: (1) 501(c)(3) nonprofits have no legal alternative to engage in political speech while all other forms of nonprofit organizations have a legal path to do so; (2) some 501(c)(3) nonprofits are regularly warned to obey the rules of the Johnson Amendment prohibiting political speech, while other 501(c)(3) nonprofits (in particular newspapers and Democrat-leaning churches) are permitted to engage in such political speech with impunity; (3) the IRC automatically silences churches by placing them into the 501(c)(3) category without application, thereby precluding them from engaging in political speech. No other entity is silenced without any action on its part.

152. Denial of equal protection rights by any agency of the government of the United States violates the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution. *Bolling v. Sharpe*, 347 U.S. 497, 499 (1954).

153. The Johnson Amendment, as written and as enforced by the IRS, denies Plaintiffs equal protection because “two or more classifications of similarly situated persons were treated differently” under the statute. *Gallegos–Hernandez v. United States*, 688 F.3d 190, 195 (5th Cir. 2012); *see also Stefanoff v. Hays Cty.*, 154 F.3d 523, 525–26 (5th Cir. 1998).” *Duarte v. City of Lewisville, Texas*, 858 F.3d 348, 353–54 (5th Cir. 2017).

154. This denial of equal protection is subject to “strict scrutiny” because the “legislative

classification ... impinges upon a fundamental right explicitly or implicitly protected by the Constitution.” *Richard v. Hinson*, 70 F.3d 415, 417 (5th Cir. 1995) (citing *San Antonio Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 1, 17 (1973)).” *Duarte v. City of Lewisville, Texas*, 858 F.3d 348, 353–54 (5th Cir. 2017). The Johnson Amendment infringes on both the freedom of speech and the free exercise of religion, both of which are recognized as fundamental rights. *De Jonge v. State of Oregon*, 299 U.S. 353, 364 (1937) (freedom of speech); *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205, 214 (1972) (free exercise of religion).

155. There is no compelling government interest that justifies any of these denials of equal protection.
156. The government has not pursued its policy in the least restrictive means possible. At a minimum, 501(c)(3) nonprofits could be given the same opportunity as 501(c)(6) nonprofits that operate principally on tax-deductible membership dues; to wit, 501(c)(3) organizations could be given the opportunity to raise non-deductible funds to engage in political speech, or they could inform their donors that a pro-rata share of their donation is not deductible.
157. These violations of the Plaintiffs’ equal protection rights constitute an irreparable injury for which there is no adequate remedy at law entitling them injunctive relief prohibiting the Defendants from enforcing the Johnson Amendment.

#### **REQUESTS FOR RELIEF**

158. Plaintiffs are entitled to a declaratory judgment that the Johnson Amendment, on its face, unconstitutionally prohibits 501(c)(3) organizations, including Plaintiffs, from engaging in protected political speech.
159. Plaintiffs are entitled to a declaratory judgment that the Johnson Amendment, as enforced by the IRS, unconstitutionally prohibits Plaintiffs from engaging in protected political speech in violation of the First Amendment.

160. Plaintiffs are entitled to a declaratory judgment that the Johnson Amendment, as enforced by the IRS, is void for vagueness in violation of the Fifth Amendment.
161. Plaintiffs are entitled to a declaratory judgment that the Johnson Amendment, on its face and as applied by the IRS, violates the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.
162. Plaintiffs are entitled to a declaratory judgment that the Johnson Amendment, on its face and as applied by the IRS, violates the Plaintiffs' rights to the free exercise of religion as protected by the First Amendment.
163. Plaintiffs Sand Springs Church and First Baptist Church Wascom are entitled to a declaratory judgment that the Johnson Amendment is unconstitutional vis-à-vis churches because it prohibits aspects of the free expression of churches without exception, thus violating the rights of churches to freedom of speech and the free exercise of religion, both protected by the First Amendment, and, furthermore, violates the Religious Freedom Restoration Act for the same reasons. Further, this provision violates the equal protection principle contained within the Fifth Amendment.
164. Plaintiffs are entitled to a declaratory judgment that the Johnson Amendment, on its face and as applied by the IRS, treats Plaintiffs in an unconstitutionally unequal manner as alleged above in violation of the Fifth Amendment.
165. Plaintiffs are entitled to injunctive relief to prohibit the continued application of the Johnson Amendment insofar as it operates to prohibit political speech.

#### **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs respectfully pray that this Court grant Plaintiffs a judgment as follows:

1. A declaratory judgment that the Johnson Amendment is unconstitutional as alleged above.
2. Injunctive relief against the Defendants prohibiting them from enforcing the Johnson Amendment.

3. Reasonable attorney's fees under 28 U.S.C. § 2412.
4. Such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and appropriate.

Dated: February 19, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

/s/Michael P. Farris

Michael Farris  
DC Bar No. 385969  
National Religious Broadcasters  
20 F Street  
Seventh Floor  
Washington, DC 20001  
571-359-6000  
[mfarris@nrb.org](mailto:mfarris@nrb.org)

David A. Kallman  
MI Bar No. P34200  
Kallman Legal Group, PLLC  
Attorney at Law  
5600 W. Mount Hope Hwy.  
Lansing, MI 48917  
517-322-3207  
[dave@kallmanlegal.com](mailto:dave@kallmanlegal.com)

Stephen Kallman  
MI Bar No. P75622  
Kallman Legal Group, PLLC  
Attorney at Law  
5600 W. Mount Hope Hwy.  
Lansing, MI 48917  
517-322-3207  
[steve@kallmanlegal.com](mailto:steve@kallmanlegal.com)

Andrew W. Stinson  
State Bar No. 24028013  
RAMEY & FLOCK, PC  
100 E. Ferguson Street, Suite 500  
Tyler, TX 75702  
903-597-3301  
[andys@rameyflock.com](mailto:andys@rameyflock.com)

Rita M. Peters  
State Bar No. 46821  
7586 Stoney Lick Road  
Mount Crawford, VA 22841  
540-830-1229  
[rpeters@selfgovern.com](mailto:rpeters@selfgovern.com)

*Attorneys for Plaintiff*

**EXHIBIT A**

[PRINT FULL VERSION](#)[VIEW 2 PAGE SUMMARY](#)**2020**

# Voter Prayer Guide

**In this important election year, the most fundamental questions about who we are and what is moral are underpinning all the debates and rhetoric.**

**This voter prayer guide is designed to enable you to compare and pray through the party platforms with each other and with the Word of God, so that you can VOTE YOUR VALUES.**



## Life

### Democratic Party

"We will appoint U.S. Supreme Court justices and federal judges who . . . will respect and enforce foundational precedents, including . . . Roe v. Wade ..... Democrats believe every woman should be able to access high quality reproductive health care services, including safe and legal abortion.

We oppose and will fight to overturn federal and state laws that create barriers to women's reproductive health and rights." [\(2020 Democratic Party Platform, 39, 42\)](#)

### Republican Party

"The Constitution's guarantee that no one can 'be deprived of life, liberty or property' deliberately echoes the Declaration of Independence's proclamation that 'all' are 'endowed by their Creator' with the inalienable right to life. Accordingly, we assert the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental right to life which cannot be infringed. We support a human life amendment to the Constitution and legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to children before birth." [\(Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 13\)](#)

*For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. (Ps 139:13-15)*

Father God, we pray that Your Holy Spirit, who convicts of sin and righteousness, would go throughout this land and convict every single person of Your great love for them and of Your destiny and value for every person. Let Your truth about the value of every life overwhelm us and our nation's leaders.

## Religious Freedom

### Democratic Party

"Democrats celebrate America's history of religious pluralism and tolerance, and recognize the countless acts of service of our faith communities, as well as the paramount importance of maintaining the separation between church and state enshrined in our Constitution." [\(2020 Democratic Party Platform, 48\)](#)

### Republican Party

"We value the right of America's religious leaders to preach, and Americans to speak freely, according to their faith. Republicans believe the federal government, specifically the IRS, is constitutionally prohibited from policing or censoring speech based on religious convictions or beliefs..... We pledge to defend the religious beliefs and rights of conscience of all Americans and to safeguard religious institutions against government control . [W]e strongly support the freedom of Americans to act in accordance with their religious beliefs, not only in their houses of worship, but also in their everyday lives." [\(Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 11-12\)](#)



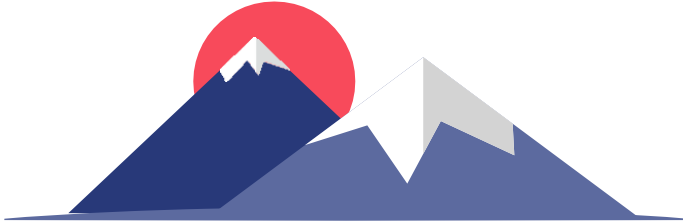
*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (Jn 8:36)*

Lord God, we thank You for the freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, all of which we can recognize because of what You have done for us and our nation. We pray that You would preserve in our nation our ability to exercise freely the rights that You have endowed to us.

# Environment

## Democratic Party

**"Climate change is a global emergency. We have no time to waste in taking action to protect Americans' lives and futures." [\(2020 Democratic Party Platform, 49\)](#)**



## Republican Party

**"Conservation is inherent in conservatism. As the pioneer of environmentalism a century ago, the Republican Party reaffirms the moral obligation to be good stewards of the God-given natural beauty and resources of our country. We assert that private ownership has been the best guarantee of conscientious stewardship, while some of the worst instances of degradation have occurred under government control." [\(Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 21\)](#)**

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Gen 1:26)*

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (Gen 2:15)*

*Lord, please help us to be wise stewards of Your creation that You put in our charge. May we be motivated by truth and love — not captivated by fear.*

# Marriage and Sexuality

## Democratic Party

**"Democrats applaud this year's U.S. Supreme Court decision that made clear that employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity violates the law . . . We will fight to enact the Equality Act . . . We will work to ensure LGBTQ+ people are not discriminated against when seeking to adopt or foster children, protect LGBTQ+ children from bullying and assault, and guarantee transgender students' access to facilities based on their gender identity." [\(2020 Democratic Party Platform, 42\)](#)**

## Republican Party

**"Foremost among those institutions is the American family. It is the foundation of civil society, and the cornerstone of the family is natural marriage, the union of one man and one woman... [We oppose the imposition of] a social and cultural revolution upon the American people by wrongly redefining sex discrimination . . . reshap[ing] our entire society — to fit the mold of an ideology alien to America's history and traditions." [\(Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 31, 35\)](#)**

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:27)*

*Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. (Heb 13:18)*

*Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. (Heb 13:4)*

*Creator God, thank You that our value and personhood is based on being created by You, in Your image, and that we are created fearfully and wonderfully. Let our laws and our leaders reflect this truth and reflect Your commands about what marriage is.*

## Health Care

### Democratic Party

"Democrats have fought to achieve universal health care for a century. We are proud to be the party of Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act ..... [W]e fundamentally believe health care is a right for all ...." ([2020 Democratic Party Platform, 26-27](#))



### Republican Party

"Any honest agenda for improving healthcare must start with repeal of the dishonestly named Affordable Care Act..... It has driven up prices for all consumers. Their insurance premiums have dramatically increased while their deductibles have risen about eight times faster than wages in the last ten years ....It must be removed and replaced with an approach based on genuine competition, patient choice, excellent care, wellness, and timely access to treatment." ([Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 36](#))

*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal 6:2)*

*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (Jas 5:13)*

Lord Jesus, You are the master healer and the One who cleared out the money-changers in the temple. Please look down on us and divinely inspire those who can bring ethics and excellent healthcare to our country. May those who suffer with health problems and financial worries be drawn to You for solace.

## Economy

### Democratic Party

"Democrats will forge a new social and economic contract with the American people—a contract that creates millions of new jobs and promotes shared prosperity, closes racial gaps in income and wealth, guarantees the right to join or form a union, raises wages and ensures equal pay for women and paid family leave for all, and safeguards a secure and dignified retirement." ([2020 Democratic Party Platform, 6](#))



### Republican Party

"Government cannot create prosperity, though government can limit or destroy it. Prosperity is the product of self-discipline, enterprise, saving and investment by individuals, but it is not an end in itself. Prosperity provides the means by which citizens and their families can maintain their independence from government, raise their children by their own values, practice their faith, and build communities of cooperation and mutual respect. It is also the foundation for our nation's global leadership, for it is the vigor of our economy which makes possible our military strength and our national security." ([Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 1](#))

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. (1 Tm 6:10)*

*But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Tm 5:8)*

Father God, we pray for an economic system that encourages and rewards the biblical values of hard work and personal generosity. We pray for governmental plans and policies that would discourage debt and greed and encourage wisdom in how we use our money, as individuals and as a nation.

## Racism

### Democratic Party

**"Democrats will root out structural and systemic racism in our economy and our society, and reform our criminal justice system from top to bottom, because we believe Black lives matter. We will give hate no safe harbor. We will never amplify or legitimize the voices of bigotry, racism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, or white supremacy. Democrats will protect and promote the equal rights of all our citizens. .... We commit ourselves to the vision articulated by Frederick Douglass of "a Government founded upon justice, and recognizing the equal rights of all." (2020 Democratic Party Platform, 6)**

### Republican Party

**"We denounce bigotry, racism, anti-Semitism, ethnic prejudice, and religious intolerance. Therefore, we oppose discrimination based on race, sex, religion, creed, disability, or national origin and support statutes to end such discrimination. As the Party of Abraham Lincoln, we must continue to foster solutions to America's difficult challenges when it comes to race relations today. We continue to encourage equality for all citizens and access to the American Dream. Merit and hard work should determine advancement in our society, so we reject unfair preferences, quotas, and set-asides." (Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 9)**

*The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us . . . (Acts 17:24-27)*

Father, forgive us for all the sins of injustice in our nation. Please heal our prejudices and help us to truly see one another as you see us.

## Immigration

### Democratic Party

**"Democrats support policies and programs to make it easier for qualified immigrants and their families to become full and equal citizens, including increasing funding for culturally appropriate immigrant inclusion and citizenship services, legal support, English classes and bilingual education, workforce development, and adult education." (2020 Democratic Party Platform, 64)**

### Republican Party

**"Our party is the natural home for those who come in search of freedom and justice. We welcome all to the Great Opportunity Party. The greatest asset of the American economy is the American worker. Our immigration system must protect American working families and their wages, for citizens and legal immigrants alike, in a way that will improve the economy." (Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 25)**

*Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart." (Zec 7:9-10)*

*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad (Rom 13:1-3)*

Lord, we pray for peace in our land, and wisdom for those in leadership. We ask that righteousness and justice would prevail, for righteousness exalts a nation. Please give us insight on how we are to show kindness to foreigners even as we honor the citizens who live here.

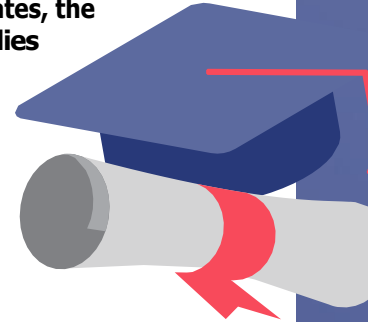
## Education

### Democratic Party

**"As Democrats, we believe that education is a critical public good—not a commodity—and that it is the government's responsibility to ensure that every child, everywhere, is able to receive a world-class education that enables them to lead meaningful lives, no matter their race, ZIP code, disability status, sexual orientation, gender identity, . . . or household income." [\(2020 Democratic Party Platform, 64\)](#)**

### Republican Party

**"Parents are a child's first and foremost educators, and have primary responsibility for the education of their children. Parents have a right to direct their children's education, care, and upbringing. We support a constitutional amendment to protect that right from interference by states, the federal government, or international bodies such as the United Nations. We reject a one-size-fits-all approach to education and support a broad range of choices for parents and children at the state and local level." [\(Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 33\)](#)**



*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Dt 6:6-7)*

*Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. (Prv 22:6)*

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. (Hos 4:6)*

*Lord, we pray for the education system in the U.S., for all the educators who pour countless hours into our students, and for our national, state, and local governments to rely on facts when deciding what is best for students, not politics or propaganda.*

## Israel

### Democratic Party

**"Democrats recognize the worth of every Israeli and every Palestinian. That's why we will work to help bring to an end a conflict that has brought so much pain to so many. We support a negotiated two-state solution that ensures Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state with recognized borders and upholds the right of Palestinians to live in freedom and security in a viable state of their own. Democrats oppose any unilateral steps by either side—including annexation—that undermine prospects for two states." [\(2020 Democratic Party Platform, 91\)](#)**

### Republican Party

**"Beyond our mutual strategic interests, Israel is likewise an exceptional country that shares our most essential values. It is the only country in the Middle East where freedom of speech and freedom of religion are found. Therefore, support for Israel is an expression of Americanism, and it is the responsibility of our government to advance policies that reflect Americans' strong desire for a relationship with no daylight between America and Israel..... We oppose any measures intended to impose an agreement or to dictate borders or other terms, and we call for the immediate termination of all U.S. funding of any entity that attempts to do so. Our party is proud to stand with Israel now and always." [\(Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 47\)](#)**

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! "May they be secure who love you! Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!" For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, "Peace be within you!" For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good. (Ps 122:6-9)*

*Lord, You have not forgotten or rejected Your ancient people, Israel. You are a faithful God who keeps covenant and loves unconditionally. Thank You that You are again showing Your compassion to the Jewish people. Help us to love those whom You love – those who are "engraved on the palms of (Your) hands."*



# Gun Ownership

## Democratic Party

**"Democrats will enact universal background checks, end online sales of guns and ammunition, close dangerous loopholes that currently allow stalkers and some individuals convicted of assault or battery to buy and possess firearms, and adequately fund the federal background check system. . . Democrats will ban the manufacture and sale of assault weapons and high capacity magazines. . . And Democrats believe that gun companies should be held responsible for their products, just like any other business, and will prioritize repealing the law that shields gun manufacturers from civil liability."** [\(2020 Democratic Party Platform, 47-48\)](#)

## Republican Party

**"We uphold the right of individuals to keep and bear arms, a natural inalienable right that predates the Constitution and is secured by the Second Amendment. Lawful gun ownership enables Americans to exercise their God-given right of self-defense for the safety of their homes, their loved ones, and their communities. . . We support firearm reciprocity legislation to recognize the right of law-abiding Americans to carry firearms to protect themselves and their families in all 50 states. We support constitutional carry statutes and salute the states that have passed them .... We also oppose any effort to deprive individuals of their right to keep and bear arms without due process of law."** [\(Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 12-13\)](#)

*Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good. (Eccl 9:18)*

*And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." And they said, "Look, Lord, here are two swords." And he said to them, "It is enough." (Lk 22:35-39)*

Lord, help us to be good stewards of our freedoms and smart with our laws. Guide our lawmakers to protect our freedoms, maintaining a society free from the tyranny of evil men.

# National Security

## Democratic Party

**"Democrats believe that we can only be strong in the world when we are strong and united at home. We believe that a healthy democracy, just society, and inclusive economy are essential prerequisites for effective American leadership abroad. And we believe that the ultimate measure—and purpose—of our foreign policy is whether it protects and advances America's security, prosperity and values—and delivers results for all Americans. We will ensure that our military has no peer ..... And, most importantly, Democrats will ensure that the reinvention of American leadership abroad prioritizes and accelerates our renewal at home. We will root a disciplined foreign policy in the needs and aspirations of the American middle class and the imperative of building a more dynamic, fair, and resilient society—the ultimate wellspring of our power."** [\(2020 Democratic Party Platform, 72-73\)](#)

## Republican Party

**"We are the party of peace through strength. . . Tyranny and injustice thrive when America is weakened. The oppressed have no greater ally than a confident and determined United States, backed by the strongest military on the planet. . . . We affirm our party's tradition of world leadership established by President Eisenhower and followed by every Republican president since. It stands for enormous power — and the prudence to use it sparingly, precisely, and only in grave necessity. It stands for involvement, not intervention. It requires consultation, not permission to act. It leads from the front — and ensures all others do their parts as well. It embraces American exceptionalism and rejects the false prophets of decline and diminution."** [\(Republican Party Platform 2016/2020, 41, 46\)](#)

*One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you, just as he promised you. (Joshua 23:10)*

*Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle . . . (Ps 144:1)*

Lord, we pray for a hedge of protection for the U.S. Help expose all evil schemes against our nation and guide our leaders in all aspects of foreign policy and national security.

**EXHIBIT B**

# RECORD & POLICY COMPARISON PRAYER GUIDE



HARRIS/WALZ

Intercessors for America



TRUMP/VANCE

and the Biden/Harris Administration

and the Trump Administration

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

(JN 8:36)

Opposed religious exemptions from the vaccine mandate. Sought to **weaken RFRA**, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act; **Opposed churches opening** during Covid. Supports radical pro-LGBTQ Equality Act.

Advocated for the **repeal of the Johnson Amendment**, and did not enforce during his term. Established **religious freedom watchdogs** in all administration departments. Opposed the pro-LGBTQ Equality Act.

## IMMIGRATION AND BORDER

(ROM 13:1-3)

Was Border Czar during **largest border invasion in history**. Walz advocates for **open borders and amnesty**, including free healthcare and college for illegals.

**Constructed 458 miles of border wall**. Enacted the successful Remain in Mexico policy. **Limited illegal entries to all-time low**.

## ECONOMY

(PRV 12:24; PS 128:2)

Prices skyrocketed under Biden/Harris administration. **Price of gasoline doubled** during the administration. Blames big corporations. Proposes price setting and rent control.

Unemployment was a low 3.5% before Covid. GDP was at 6.8% even during the pandemic slump. **Favors lowering taxes** and cutting red tape for small businesses to flourish.

## FAMILY & MARRIAGE

(HEB 13:18; GEN 1:27)

Harris and Walz are **proponents of transgendering children**. No parental consent for children who receive hormone therapy. Walz **banned biblical counseling** for LGBTQ persons. Considers **LGBTQ a protected class, changing Title IX for men in women's bathrooms and sports**.

Title IX under **Trump prohibited men in women's bathrooms** and locker rooms. Safeguarded women's sports from men competing. **No federal funding for transgender treatments for children**.

## LIFE

(PS 139:13-15)

**Supports late term** and taxpayer-funded abortion on demand. Voted against the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act. **Walz scrapped parental notification** for minors and waiting periods. Harris has prosecuted pro-life activists.

Promised to veto any legislation that would weaken pro-life laws; **celebrated the overturn of Roe v. Wade**; views abortion as a state issue. Won't restrict abortion pills, supports protection of life after 15 weeks, and **against late term abortion**.

## ISRAEL

(PS 122:6-9)

Favors **Israel's right to defense**; opposes BDS.Avoided PM Netanyahu's speech to Congress. **Supports Iran nuclear deal**.

Recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capitol and **moved America's Embassy to Jerusalem**. Withdrew from Iran deal. Firm ally to Israel in tangible support.

### PRAYER POINTS FOR ELECTION PROCESSES

**PRAY** for the election process to be fair, honest, and free from fraud. (2 Cor 8:21)

**PRAY** that believers would take their responsibility/privilege to vote seriously and turn out in greater numbers than ever before. (Prv 29:2)

**PRAY** for citizens to discern truth. (Hos 14:9)

**PRAY** for schemes of the Enemy to be exposed, dismantled, and destroyed. (1 Pet 5:8)

**PRAY** for physical protection for our candidates and our nation during this time. (Ps 34:7)

**PRAY** that the outcome of the election would honor God! (Ps 85:6)

Join in praying...

Father, I pray that You would find me faithful in exercising my right to vote, and to uphold Your values as I cast my ballot to elect my leaders.

IFApray.org





**HARRIS/WALZ**

Intercessors for America

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the  
**VOTE**  
2024.org



**TRUMP/VANCE**

## NATIONAL SECURITY

(PS 144:1; JOS 23:10)

Biden/Harris Admin. **disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan**. Walz has warm relationship with China. Advocates for military personnel with gender dysphoria. Supports **VA facilities to provide abortions and gender surgeries**.

**Protected America's position** over China and withdrew from Iran deal and Paris Accords. Tariffs on Chinese goods. **Increased border protections**. Trump Administration strengthened religious liberty for military personnel.

## PARENTAL RIGHTS

(PRV 22:6; DT 6:6-7)

**Opposes school choice**. Universal national preschool. Walz's HF1655 creates **legal protection of pedophilia**. Harris/Walz policies allow for **gender change procedures on minors** without parental approval.

Introduced the "Protect Children's Innocence Act" legislation **protecting children from trans treatments**. **Parents have ultimate authority** over the state for decisions for their children.

## ELECTION INTEGRITY

(2 COR 8:21; I PT 5:8)

Proponent of ballot harvesting, drop boxes, mail-in voting, and other alternative forms of voting. **Opposes voter ID** requirement, citing disenfranchisement.

**Favors voter ID**, calls for states regularly cleaning voter rolls, advocates for citizen-only voting. Proponent of transparency in ballot tabulation process with observers and security.

## JOIN IN PRAYER AND ACTION FOR THE ELECTIONS

Pray for voters, election volunteers, and those who preside over elections in each state by visiting [PrayTheVote2024.com](https://PrayTheVote2024.com). It is the launching pad for prayer and action for the 2024 elections! And take action: check your voter registration, sign up to volunteer, report fraud concerns, and more—all in one place!

View our entire bibliography of research at [IFApray.org/louderthanwords](https://IFApray.org/louderthanwords)



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**SEND TO A FRIEND!**

**LET'S GET OUT  
THE PRAYER!**

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## VERIFICATION

I, Troy Miller, declare as follows:

1. I am the President & CEO of the National Religious Broadcasters. NRB is a plaintiff in this action.
2. I have personal knowledge of all facts alleged concerning NRB's actions, practices, and intentions as described in the foregoing Amended Complaint. If called upon I could testify concerning all such matters.
3. I verify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the factual allegations in the Amendment Complaint concerning NRB including its actions, practices, and intentions are true and correct.

Executed on February 13, 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy Miller", written over a horizontal line.

Troy Miller

## VERIFICATION

I, Erick Graham, declare as follows:

1. I am the Senior Pastor of Sand Springs Church. Sand Springs Church is a plaintiff in this action.
2. I have personal knowledge of all facts alleged concerning Sand Springs Church's actions, practices, and intentions as described in the foregoing Amended Complaint. If called upon I could testify concerning all such matters.
3. I verify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the factual allegations in the Amendment Complaint concerning Sand Springs Church including its actions, practices, and intentions are true and correct.

Executed on FEB. 13, 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erick Graham", is written over a horizontal line.

Erick Graham



## VERIFICATION

I, Dave Kubal, declare as follows:

1. I am the President & CEO of Intercessors for America. Intercessors for America is a plaintiff in this action.
2. I have personal knowledge of all facts alleged concerning Intercessors for America's actions, practices, and intentions as described in the foregoing Amended Complaint. If called upon I could testify concerning all such matters.
3. I verify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the factual allegations in the Amendment Complaint concerning Intercessors for America including its actions, practices, and intentions are true and correct.

Executed on 2/13, 2025.

  
Dave Kubal

## VERIFICATION

I, Ivy Shelton, declare as follows:

1. I am the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church Waskom. First Baptist Church Waskom is a plaintiff in this action.
2. I have personal knowledge of all facts alleged concerning First Baptist Church Waskom's actions, practices, and intentions as described in the foregoing Amended Complaint. If called upon I could testify concerning all such matters.
3. I verify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the factual allegations in the Amendment Complaint concerning First Baptist Church Waskom including its actions, practices, and intentions are true and correct.

Executed on February 16, 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ivy Shelton", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ivy Shelton